

Insurgency in Ethnically Divided Authoritarian-led Societies: A Comparative Study of Rebel Movements in Ethiopia, 1974-2014

by

Semir Yusuf Teshale

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Political Science
University of Toronto

©Copyright by Semir Yusuf Teshale 2018

SHOUT
SHARE IT



Insurgency in Ethnically Divided Authoritarian-led Societies: A Comparative Study of Rebel Movements in Ethiopia, 1974-2014

Semir Yusuf Teshale

Doctorate Degree

Department of Political Science

University of Toronto

2018

Abstract

Current literature on collective violence and civil war has emphasized underlying structural, psychological, geographic, informational, international and other variables in explaining insurgency. Some of these variables are indeed important to understand the phenomenon in question, but explaining level of insurgency requires putting emphasis on other variables that the literature either neglects or downplays. This dissertation amplifies the significance of rebel organizations as well as the *nature* of their foreign relations (foreign state leverage and interest, in addition to foreign support, a variable the existing literature stresses) in accounting for the great divergence in the intensity and durability of insurgency in authoritarian-led ethnically divided societies. In its quest for comprehending rebel organizations, it further explains the origins of organizational strength and weakness by a resort to societal and voluntarist variables, in addition to social-institutional ones that the literature already acknowledges. These arguments are illustrated by an in-depth comparative study of several insurgent groups in post-1974 Ethiopia that varied widely in their intensity and durability—both across regions and time-periods. Since the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974, Ethiopia has been engulfed by numerous armed movements that fought the state and one another with varying degrees of violence and persistence. The Dergue's period witnessed high intensity, high durability; high intensity, low durability; and low intensity, high durability insurgencies. The regime that came after it, in sharp contrast to its predecessor, enjoyed relative peace, despite the physical existence of armed groups, most of which however fought low intensity, low durability insurgencies. Holding many variables more or less constant and de-emphasizing the value of others, this study underscores the significance of the internal structure of rebel organizations--whose determinants it also traces—in explaining these variations. It also equally highlights the degree of leverage foreign states have over the rebels they support and their agenda towards the state/regime that the rebels fight, besides the mere amount of support rebels get from those states.

Acknowledgments

Writing this dissertation was an arduous but rewarding journey. Obviously, several people contributed directly and indirectly towards making this a reality. It is too difficult to mention all of them by name. All of them deserve my gratitude. I should, however, mention some of them for the unmatched enormity of their contributions. My greatest thanks go to my mother, perfectly made to be the most prominent and the most persistent source of my strength and the crown of the sweetness of my life. Mom, you consistently, tirelessly and constructively shaped my destiny and did all you could towards making smooth this long road towards academic fulfillment—always at the expense of your comfort and joy. I appreciate your life, strength and selflessness. I cannot give back in my entire lifetime what you paid. I just say many thanks to you. My dad appreciated my academic aspirations and happily agreed that I live far away from him for so long despite his constant need for my care. He waited for the end of this work with profuse patience until he passed away before seeing the light. Dad, I thank you and regret deeply for not fulfilling my duties towards you. You left me unexpectedly. My wife persisted through the difficult times, including child birth and child care in my absence, seeing light at the end of the tunnel. She never lost hope of looking for the bright days ahead even when I failed to imagine them myself. Sei, you believed in me and in my dreams. Here is the light you long waited for, my love; thank you! My little daughters, Taliya and Muneeba, were of much help ever since their birth in giving me much needed joyous breaks from work. More importantly, they instilled in me a stronger sense of purpose in life. My supervisor, Professor Jacques Bertrand, patiently and generously taught me to think and write like an academic, overlooking my shortcomings, hoping that I will one day meet his expectations for me. I do not know if I reached there yet, but I am sure I came a long way towards those expectations. Prof, you deserve my deepest gratitude and respect. My committee members, Professors Antoinette Handley and Dickson Eyoh, were wonderfully helpful since the time I got to know them, and especially after they embarked on the task of supervising this work.

Friends and relatives were of crucial importance throughout my stay in the PhD programme. Lina Yonis, my cousin, consistently and profusely granted me her motherly love and care ever since I arrived in Canada. Nabil Ziad, her husband, always stood by my side whenever and wherever I needed him. Khalid Elagab Ahmed, my brother from another mother, as I would like

to refer him as, played an immensely important job of making my life in Canada much easier than it would have been. His constant brotherly advice, guidance, and love were critically useful sources of strength and persistence. My cousins Nadia Waber and Nuriya Waber, as well as my cousin/foster mother abay Samiya Waber did their best to make my mother's life tolerable in my absence, and thus indirectly made my own life less stressful than it would have been. The regular intellectual conversations I had over the years with my dear friends Teklemichael Sahlemariam, Dr. Centime Eleni Zelleke, Dr. Dereje Feyissa, Dr. Terje Ostebo, Dragana Bodruzic, Nezifa Hussien, Abdulqadir Yassin and several others contributed towards boosting my morale and self-worth as an academic. Teklemichael Sahlemariam, Yousuf Omer and Nezifa Hussien opened up for me new avenues of information while collecting data for this research.

People who helped develop my interest in insurgency in general are too many to be exhaustively listed out by name. They range from Abdissa Ayana to Magarsa Bona, from Yared Tibebe to Abdurashid Mohammed, from Aregawi Berhe to Ras Mengesha Seyoum, from M. A. Wagris to Professor Gebru Tareke. The generosity with which they shared their insights during our extensive discussions was truly admirable. My appreciation also goes to the several informants in the field many of whom may not wish to be mentioned by name. I thank all without exception!

Table of Contents

Abstract-----	ii
Acknowledgements-----	iii
Table of Contents-----	v
List of Tables-----	x
Acronyms of Insurgent Groups-----	xi

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Indicators and Factors that Influence Organizational Capacity-----	6
1.2 External Connections: Foreign State Support, Leverage, and Interest-----	11
1.3 Methods and Cases-----	15
1.4 The Cases in Detail and Specific Arguments-----	20
1.5 Significance and Contributions-----	23
1.6 Organization-----	28

Chapter 2 - Theories of Civil War and Insurgency

2.1 On the Onset and Intensity of Collective Violence-----	30
2.2 Durability of Collective Violence-----	35

2.3 Ending Civil War-----	36
2.4 The Role of Organizations in the Making of Collective Violence-----	38
2.5 Organizational Capacity and Insurgency-----	40
2.6 International Connections: Foreign Support, Dependence, and Interests-----	49
2.7 Theoretical Framework: A Summary-----	54

Chapter 3 - Collective Violence and Insurgency in Post-1974 Ethiopia: Rival Explanations

3.1 Sources of Grievance in Pre- and Post-1991 Ethiopia-----	60
3.1.1 Response to Ethnic Division-----	61
3.1.1.1 Response to Ethnic Division: Pre-1991-----	61
3.1.1.2 Response to Ethnic Division: Post-1991-----	65
3.1.2 Economic Indicators: Poverty and Income Inequality in Pre- and Post-1991 Ethiopia-----	93
3.1.2.1 Reflections on Regional Poverty Levels in the Pre-1991 Era-----	94
3.1.2.2 Post-1991 Poverty Indicators-----	97
3.1.2.3 Income Inequality in Post-1974 Ethiopia-----	101
3.2 State Repression-----	104

3.3 Termination of the Civil War as an Explanation of Reduced Insurgency-----	107
3.4 War Fatigue-----	109

Chapter 4 - Organizational Capacity of Insurgents, 1974–91

4.1 Prolonged and Intense Insurgency: Eritrea and Tigray-----	115
4.1.1 The EPLF-----	115
4.1.2 The TPLF-----	128
4.2 Prolonged but less Intense Insurgency: Rebellion in Oromolands-----	138
4.3 Short-Lived but Intense Insurgency: The Ogaden-----	153

Chapter 5 - Organizational Capacity of Opposition Forces, 1991-2014

5.1 The Prelude to the Transitional Period: The TPLF's Hegemony in the Making-- -----	164
5.2 The Transition: Ensuring EPRDF's/TPLF's Hegemony-----	166
5.3 Low Intensity, Low Durability Insurgencies-----	170

5.3.1 OLF after 1992-----	170
5.3.2 The EPPF-----	178

Chapter 6 - Foreign Support, Foreign Leverage and Organizational Capacity: Ethiopian Insurgents, 1974–2014

6.1 Foreign Support for Regimes, 1974–2014-----	190
6.1.1 Foreign Support for the Dergue-----	190
6.1.1.1 Relations with the US-----	192
6.1.1.2 Relations with the USSR-----	193
6.1.1.3 Relations with other Communist Countries and Israel-----	195
6.1.2 Support for the EPRDF: The West and EPRDF-----	198
6.2 Foreign Support for Rebels, 1974–2014-----	200
6.2.1 Insurgents and their Foreign Backers: Initial Heydays-----	200
6.2.2 Foreign Support, Organizational Strength and the Durability of Insurgency-----	207
6.2.2.1 The Eritrean Fronts-----	207
6.2.2.2 The TPLF and EDU-----	212
6.2.3 Foreign Support, Foreign Leverage, and Foreign Interest-----	217

6.2.3.1 The WSLF and SALF-----	218
6.2.3.2 The Eritrean-based Insurgents-----	226
 Conclusions-----	 256
Bibliography-----	261
 Appendix:	
Intensity of Insurgency in post-1974 Ethiopia-----	289

List of Tables

Table 1: Ethiopian Insurgent Groups and Insurgency Levels-----	23
Table 2: Levels of Insurgency and Variables Explaining their Occurrence-----	56

Acronyms of Insurgent Groups

ADM: Amhara Democratic Movement

ALF: Afar Liberation Front

ARDUF: Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front

EDU: Ethiopian Democratic Union

ELF: Eritrean Liberation Front

EPDM: Ethiopian People Democratic Movement

EPLA: Eritrean People's Liberation Army (military wing of EPLF)

EPLF: Eritrean People's Liberation Front

EPPF: Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front

EPRP: Eritrean People Revolutionary Party (party within EPLF)

EPRP: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party

G7: Ginbot 7

G7 Popular: Ginbot 7 Popular (armed wing/youth affiliate of the G7)

MLLT: Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (party within TPLF)

OLF: Oromo Liberation Front

ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front

SALF: Somali-Abo Liberation Front

TPDM: Tigrayan People's Democratic Movement

TPLF: Tigrayan People's Liberation Front

TLF: Tigrayan Liberation Front

WSLF: Western Somali Liberation Front

Chapter 1

The issue of insurgency in the global South is a major concern for academics and policymakers around the world. Many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have been marred by high-scale intra-state conflicts both during and since the end of the Cold War. Collective violence in the form of civil war¹ has become a persistent and defining feature of these countries. The most difficult to resolve and costly of these wars have taken place in authoritarian ethnically² divided societies, where ethnocultural differences are “persistent markers of political identity and bases for political mobilization” (Choudhry 2008, 5). In these countries, oppositional politics has taken the form of violent resistance to nationalist, centralist, and ethnocratic tendencies of the authoritarian state, and has been accompanied by strong demands for democratization, self-determination (either within or outside the state), power-sharing (economic, political, territorial, or military), and cultural autonomy (spearheaded by ethnic liberation movements). Faced with stiff ethnically mobilized opposition, authoritarian state leaders in these countries have made desperate attempts to end civil strife and challenge to their rule—not by responding positively to the demands of their opponents, but by resorting to repressive measures. In many instances, they have failed to surmount the external challenges, and have either been shortly overthrown or continued to rule over their countries as embattled leaders.

But not all states with this social structure (ethnically divided) and regime type exhibit similar

¹Civil war, in this dissertation, is understood as “[i]ntrastate war fought within state borders between a government and non-government forces . . . In order to be classified as a civil war, the central government should be actively involved in military action with effective resistance for both sides, and there should be at least 1000 battle related deaths during the war” (Correlates of War n.d.). According to the same source, between 1946 and 1997, there were 103 civil wars in the world.

² For my purposes, I use ethnicity in its broader sense, as any “cultural ascriptive identity, actual or imagined” (Ahuja and Ashutosh 2005, 259; for more on this understanding of ethnicity, see Horowitz 1985).

levels of political turbulence. In addition to the scenario mentioned above, a category of states (or time periods and regions in one country) exists at the other extreme: although ethnically divided and authoritarian (with the resultant prevalent and deep-seated ethnic dissatisfaction), states in this category have remained free of high-scale collective violence against the state. The level of insurgency in ethnically divided authoritarian states is thus not easily generalizable, despite the near certain ability to generalize about the prevalence of unmet ethnic and other political demands among the ethnically (or ideologically) mobilized section of the respective societies. Notwithstanding the constant phenomenon of widespread ethnic and political grievance under authoritarian rule in the developing world, ethnically divided societies experience varying levels of political violence. Some of these countries, or regions within them, enjoy a high level of relative peace, while others see long-standing civil wars. In this respect, it seems worthwhile asking the following question: What explains the variance in the state of insurgency despite the consistency in the unresponsiveness of regimes to societal demands/interests in ethnically divided societies under authoritarian rule?

Before moving on, however, I need to define “insurgency” as I use it in this dissertation. I will use the term as a continuous variable to primarily indicate level of violence. Insurgency is “a struggle between a [an organized] non-ruling group and the ruling authorities³ in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources . . . and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of one or more aspects of politics” (O’Neil 1990, 13)⁴. Insurgency so construed

³Although my major focus in this research is the armed confrontation between insurgents and states, I will also make some references to inter-insurgent wars as they relate to the topic of this study.

⁴ While some scholars (such as Fearon and Laitin 2003 and Paul et al. 2013) do not distinguish between civil war and insurgency, many others (for instance, Pustay 1965; Leigh 2010; and Kalyvas and Balcells 2010) do. I will follow a different approach that considers civil war as the most extreme manifestation of insurgency, which otherwise appears in milder forms too. As far as violence is concerned, insurgency represents a continuum that starts with minor armed clashes and finally culminates in civil war. Apart from

gives due consideration to armed confrontation—that is, collective political violence—between a government and opposition groups, as well as the different levels of violence involved in the confrontations (from armed conflicts resulting in few deaths to civil wars with high death rates). Although some insurgent groups are “heavily located in urban areas” (Staniland 2010, 1624), I will focus on rural-based groups, or “guerrilla warfare from rural base areas” (Fearon and Laitin 2003,75).

In this dissertation, I measure the level of insurgency—or of political or collective violence, terms that I use mostly interchangeably with insurgency⁵—using two indicators: intensity and durability. Intensity is measured by the number of deaths of combatants in the course of the fight between government forces and rebels. The higher the death toll, the higher the level of intensity and the higher the level of insurgency. However, intensity alone is not a reliable indicator of the magnitude of insurgency since a one-time but effective (e.g., due to advanced warfare technology) massive strike of rebel forces by regime troops could result in a multitude of deaths. The death toll resulting from such a large-scale cleansing of opponent bases does not accurately indicate the stiffness of combat between the warring parties. Hence, the durability of the insurgency is also a significant indicator. The more persistent the armed struggle, the higher the

higher death tolls, greater level of organization achieved by the contenders of the state distinguishes civil war from armed conflict. Moreover, “opposing parties must have the ability to engage in more than just sporadic fighting for any violence to be classified a civil war” (Leigh 2010, 18). While the progression from political activity to armed conflict and finally to civil war is not uncommon in the phenomenon of insurgency, it does not mean all insurgencies necessarily pass through all the stages to reach the level of civil war. Nor does it mean that all insurgencies stay put to reach that final stage of violence, either.

⁵But one should note here that, strictly speaking, collective violence is a more generic term, of which insurgency denotes a particular type—mainly involving organized groups. Moreover, as they currently exist, the literature on collective violence and that on insurgency, although very much overlapping, are also distinct. This study tends to blend the two literatures and thereby fills the gaps in one by taking insights from the other and developing those insights further.

level of insurgency. It is important to note here that physical presence inside the country—most importantly in the form of establishing a base area and taking part in a concerted and visible set of activities—is what counts in assessing durability, and not the mere existence of an armed group somewhere outside the state (in exile). Durability alone reveals little if there was any engagement between the government and insurgents—hence the need to include intensity. Thus, in this dissertation, I use both durability and intensity to measure the level of insurgency in a country. On the basis of this, I have identified four levels of insurgency: high intensity, high durability; high intensity, low durability; low intensity, high durability; and low intensity, low durability.⁶

The major objective of the dissertation is thus to explain the difference in the level of insurgency across cases where major sources of grievance (including, but not limited to, authoritarian politics) are held constant. In other words, I aim to explain the reasons behind the occurrence of the above-mentioned four scenarios in levels of insurgency. The emphasis here is on ethnically divided societies because of their assumed proneness to high-scale intra-state conflict. In the course of explaining the divergence in the scale of insurgency, my research also takes stock of the existing literature's relevance to answering the stated question.

A myriad of theories account for the reasons behind the onset, intensity, durability, and termination of collective violence. Among those that focus on onset and intensity, the most

⁶ I want to indicate here that although the variables' intensity and durability are construed as continuous, as already mentioned, I will set a base line or threshold beyond or below which intensity/durability starts to be "high" or "low." For the purpose of this dissertation, I will take seven years to be a base line for durability (i.e., lower or higher durability) and 1000 deaths to serve as the same for intensity. Needless to say, it is mainly important to have such thresholds in quantitative, binary analyses. Since this study is qualitative and mainly meant to describe "ideal typical" situations, the provision of the numeric thresholds is merely indicative.

famous are grievance and greed models with their multiple proxies, including, in the former category, integrationist policies of states (Bandyopadhyay and Green 2011), income inequality (Fajnzylber et al. 2002), and the absence of democratic rights (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000); and in the latter category, dependence on natural resources and rate of poverty (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; 2001). Durability of political violence is explained through some of the above factors, but also through the form of insurgency (rural-based or urban-based) (Fearon 2004), the scale of ethnic division (Collier et al. 2004), international support (Regan 2000), scale of state repression (Davenport 2007), and bargaining failure between rebels and regimes (Walter 2009). Termination of civil war, which is directly related to its durability, is explained by the ending of war by either negotiation settlement or rebel victory (Norris 2008; Toft 2010). While these are not the only variables the literature invokes, they form the bedrock of the academic debate on the different aspects of collective violence and intrastate conflict.

While this dissertation acknowledges the value of some of the above variables, it contributes further to our knowledge of collective violence by addressing the literature's neglect of two sets of variables that are crucial to an understanding of insurgency. While scholars give due emphasis to the underlying structural, psychological, geographic, and other causes of collective violence, many, first, ignore the mechanism by which several of these variables become a sustained violent struggle with a state, which insurgency is essentially all about. Hence, in line with some of the classic and recent literature on insurgency/guerrilla warfare as well as social movement theory, this dissertation stresses the importance of organizational aspects of collective violence in explaining the onset but more importantly the intensity and durability of intrastate conflicts. Secondly, this research also gives due credence to the value of three other inter-related variables associated with international connections of rebel groups, in so far as they boost or stunt

insurgency: that is, foreign support (which is already emphasized in the literature), foreign leverage, and foreign state interest. By bringing the concepts of foreign leverage and interest into the analysis of the external connections of rebels, I try to shed some new light on what actually matters in explaining levels of insurgency using international variables.

In this dissertation I argue that the intensity and durability of insurgency significantly depends on the organizational capacity of rebel groups and the nature of their international connections, namely, the foreign support they have, and their level of dependence on, as well as the interests of, their external supporters. Factors such as ethnically exclusivist state policies, undemocratic state practices, and economic inequality—usually associated with ethnic-based rebellion—are necessary conditions but cannot on their own sufficiently explain the emergence and sustenance of organized rebellion. Some of these factors are usually found rampant in many societies of the global South, but only few of them undergo sustained and high-scale insurgency. The organizational capacity and characteristics of rebel movements and their international connections can thus go a long way in explaining why some societies experience insurgency while others that share similar underlying social and political structures experience relative peace. The same factors also explain why even among societies that experience collective violence, the level of insurgency varies across countries, as well as across different time-periods and regions within the same country.

1.1 Indicators and Factors that Influence Organizational Capacity

I define the *organizational capacity* of insurgents as their ability to ensure their existence as a “cohesive entity” (see Clarke 2015, 19). Such a capacity helps rebel groups not only to “survive” but also to “influence” their environment (Esberg 2015, 248). The stronger the organizational

capacity of rebel groups, the greater their ability to “rally supporters, seek material contributions, and formalize collective action into [a sustained] movement” (Beck 2008, 1568). In order to accomplish these and other tasks, insurgent organizations need to acquire at least two crucial characteristics, which could be considered as the major elements that define the strength (or their absence defining the weakness) of organizational capacity. First, strong organizations have cohesive leadership that runs the major tactical and strategic affairs of the insurgency with unity and in close coordination among themselves. Severe division in the outlooks, plans, or interests of the leaders could lead to the dismantlement of the group under its own weight or due to the influence of state repression or another rebel group with superior organizational capacity. Second, strong rebel groups have tight command structure or a high degree of centralization.⁷ This means the organization is set up such that the compartmentalization of tasks to achieve division of labor is complemented by heirarchicalization of all those divisions into a single, compact command structure. Especially important is that the military structure is strictly subordinated to the political, which is in turn headed by a strong leader or a group of leaders at the top. This element is crucial if a rebel group is to effectively and efficiently coordinate activities in a long fight with a robust state,⁸ which is the kind of state/regime this dissertation primarily examines⁹.

⁷In this dissertation, tight command structure is contrasted with loose or divided organizational structure.

⁸ I use this term in light of Belin’s (2004) concept of “robust authoritarianism” and Albertus and Menaldo’s (2012) concept of “coercive capacity” of states. According to these authors, the nature of the coercive apparatus of the state is fundamental to understanding the prospect of regime transition or overthrow in a given country. I use robust state to signify the strength of the coercive apparatus of states that some type of insurgents manage to seriously challenge, in contrast to many others. I follow Albertus and Menaldo in measuring robustness of the state in terms of its military size (2012, 7).

⁹ It should, therefore, be clear to the reader that this dissertation acknowledges the state and its capacity as an important variable to understand insurgency; it after all takes strong state as a condition for the validity of the arguments it advances. However, it shifts the focus of the analysis to other variables by way of

Moreover—and this is another element within the domain of “tight” command structure—it is also important that rebel groups ensure all their members remain strictly loyal to the rules of the organization and the edicts of their superiors. A strong organization has a highly disciplined set of fighters who are loyal to the organization and their leaders. With highly disciplined fighters, an insurgent group can effectively use them to achieve its aims whenever, however, and wherever it wants. By contrast, fighters with little interest or willingness to respect rules or follow commands or with a high sense of independence would be liabilities in any groups’ efforts to survive a difficult struggle or inflict damage on its enemies in a sustained manner. Rebel groups lacking coherence and structural unity—those with loose organizational structures—are liable to fracture, especially under the weight of exogenous shocks.

Although distinct, the two components of organizational capacity—leadership cohesiveness and centralization (tight command structure)—do influence each other and could be seen as a system. For instance, cohesive leaders tend to create a unified and centralized organization that mirrors their unity. Similarly, producing disciplined fighters requires the relentless efforts of group of leaders (through the use of some enforcement mechanisms, as we will see below) who are united under a common cause¹⁰. Although the two elements are interrelated in many different ways, the cohesion of leaders usually takes precedence over the command structure as the starting point of

emphasizing the conditions—such as the internal strength of anti-state forces—under which states could be able or fail to achieve their aims of containing/extinguishing opposition to their rule. Hence, this dissertation in a way refines our understanding of the extent to which state capacity (in particular repression) could explain political outcomes.

¹⁰ The directionality of leadership cohesion and discipline of fighters needs to be clear. Discipline comes from cohesive leadership through the intermediate variable of enforcement mechanism (see below). The discipline of fighters, however, does not have much impact in creating cohesive leadership (and is unlikely to exist in the first place in the absence of such leadership).

and a necessary condition for the coming into being of a centralized organization with disciplined fighters. Severe divisions within the ranks of the leadership, if not tackled swiftly by the leaders either through negotiation or the use of force,¹¹ lead to serious organizational crisis in the rebel group.

How can we account for the making of strong and weak organizations? This dissertation also delves into the origins of organizational capacity among rebel groups, asking how and why some rebel organizations excel in their capacity while others do not. I argue that the organizational capacity of rebel groups depends greatly on four factors: the pre-existing condition of collective identity among the people; the elite decision to tap into and capitalize on that collective identity; the presence or absence of a socio-institutional base that leaders share; and the presence or absence of enforcement mechanisms within the organization.

First, the greater and deeper the cultural division, and the lesser any pre-existing constructed collective identity among the people, the more difficult it will be for rebel leaders to create strong and cohesive organizations. In many cases, the rebel organizations that emerge in such divided societies end up reproducing the societal divisions within their own internal structures, weakening the organizations. Conversely, rebel activists operating among more homogenous populations that had a stronger sense of collective identity before the birth of the rebel movement are better able to create more cohesive organizations.

Secondly, it is not enough that the people share a broad sense of collective identity; the rebels must use that existing consciousness to build an organization with a unified sense of purpose and

¹¹We will later consider the condition under which the use of force can help eliminate dissent in rebel groups

identity. Some rebels tap into and take advantage of the already existing collective identity to further solidify it among their people, using that identity as a source of inspiration and ideology to build a strong organization. Some rebels, however, choose—for any number of reasons including to promote their own personal influence—to ignore the collective identity, instead becoming enmeshed in sectarian (tribal, clannish, regional, or religious) divisions within society. By incorporating these divisions into the organizational structure of the rebel group, they weaken it.

Thirdly, rebel leaders who share common social and institutional roots have a higher chance of fortifying leadership cohesion if and when they establish rebel organization. On the other hand, leaders with very different social and institutional backgrounds find it difficult to consistently converge on the major trajectories of the insurgency they lead, which negatively affects the coherence of the group's leadership.

Finally, strong insurgent groups also use enforcement mechanisms to ensure internal discipline and to consistently and strictly uphold the organization's tight command structure. To this end, they put in place intelligence and punishment systems, and provide rigorous training for their fighters. Insurgent groups that fail to establish these systems would create conditions in which a sense of independence and indiscipline would proliferate among the fighters, eroding the leaders' absolute control over their fighters and leading to loose organizations.

1.2 External Connections: Foreign State Support, Leverage, and Interest

Apart from organizational capacity of rebel movements, the other set of variables I focus on in this dissertation concerns the international connections of insurgent groups: foreign state support, foreign state leverage, and foreign state interests.¹²

The literature has emphasized foreign support for rebels. I will make two arguments in relation to this factor. First, international support for rebels is indeed important and at times essential in conducting insurgency, and its absence could have negative repercussions for insurgent activities. However, in contrast to much of the literature on the subject, I contend that foreign support is usually associated with a short- to medium-term increase in the intensity of insurgency, whereas longer-term activities of rebel movements (their durability) largely depend on organizational capacity, rather than on the amount and kind of support from the outside.¹³ An

¹² In this dissertation, by foreign support (or external/international support), I refer to support from foreign states. It is true that insurgents get support not only from states but also from many other sources including their diaspora-based sympathizers and other insurgents. But because what states usually provide is both massive and multifarious—and hence expected to be more consequential in military terms—as compared to what others do, I will specifically focus on state support for insurgents. In addition, while foreign support includes all kinds of aid provided by states, I will put less emphasis on sanctuaries or safe havens in neighboring countries, focusing more on active material and logistical support, such as the provision of weapons and funds; the training of fighters; and the passing on of aid from other states. Foreign state leverage refers to the degree of control a foreign state has over the insurgents it supports. I use foreign leverage, external leverage, external dependence, and foreign dependence interchangeably. High foreign leverage could be detected by two key (both of which should come together) and a third concomitant factor: the fact that the entire or at least the major base area of the rebels is found in the territories of the foreign state; the fact that all kinds of support—material, logistical, and others—for the rebels come only from the foreign state and that rebels have virtually no other foreign backer or any other means of acquiring resources; and the fact that the foreign state directly interferes with key aspects of the rebel group's organization or their activities. Foreign interest refers to the strategic interests a certain foreign state has in supporting the insurgents of another state. For the purpose of this research, I identify two kinds of foreign interests: “aggressive,” referring to a foreign state's interest in actually destabilizing another state or its regime; and “conservative,” referring to a foreign state's interest that apparently lacks aggressive policy towards another state. See below for indicators.

¹³ By making this statement and marshalling evidences for it from Ethiopia (sixth chapter), I am opening an avenue for further research into the impact of foreign support to rebels on the durability of insurgency.

initial upsurge in collective violence is expected in the confrontation between a highly funded armed rebel group and an unwary, albeit robust, state. With the prolongation of the confrontation, however, a rebel group facing a coordinated and massive-scale strike of government forces or other rebel groups is sustained by its internal sources of strength, which include the discipline and dedication of its fighters, the tight command structure of its organization, and the coherence among its leaders. Hence, long-term visibility of insurgency should be associated not necessarily with increased material resource flow from outside, but with the internal power a rebel group has to maximize, coordinate, and put to good use the group's domestic multi-faceted resources, and the group's ability to convert any outside help into instruments of combat (i.e., its organizational capacity).

My second argument concerning external support qualifies the first: that is, even short-term intensification of insurgency due to foreign support is dependent on certain conditions. In analyzing the consequences of external support to rebels at any given point in the lifespan of an insurgency, two interrelated conditions emerge. The first of these is the amount of leverage the insurgent-backing state has over the insurgents it supports. This refers to the degree to which the country can interfere in internal affairs of the rebels, and the resultant level of rebel vulnerability to the dictates of that country. The second condition is the strategic interest of the state upon which the insurgents are dependent, if such dependency is the case. A state will not feel the insurgent activities of an externally dependent rebellion unless there is genuine interest on the part of the external state to destabilize the regime the rebels are fighting. The more leverage that

In the dissertation, I bring up cases that contradict the body of literature that connects long-term insurgency to foreign support. This does not however mean that I am trying to demolish all the findings of the existing literature. This work is a modest effort towards disputing the universal wisdom of the literature by introducing a more complex alternative view of the subject matter.

country has over the insurgents, the riskier the fate of the insurgent groups, as they continue losing control over their activities and their existence as an organization. To the extent that the external power has an aggressive foreign policy (i.e., is committed to the immediate cause of the rebels—undermining the stability of the enemy regime), the insurgents are in a good position to escalate their fight against that regime. However, if the external power has or develops a conservative foreign agenda (i.e., is not interested in pursuing an aggressive policy towards the other state), then the insurgents dependent on it will likely have to downgrade activities against the enemy state. Hence, foreign support for rebels is distinct from foreign interest to destabilize another state; the existence of the former does not necessitate the existence of the latter. A very important type of vulnerability of rebel groups—which I will emphasize in this work—is that of total dependence on singular foreign support for their activities and the attendant loss of control over their organization. We will see the effects of such a scenario both when the foreign state has aggressive and when it has conservative foreign policy/interests.

How can we predict a state's foreign policy orientation towards another state? In this study I will assume that under normal conditions, states that harbor and provide multiple forms of support to the rebels of another state have, by default, an aggressive foreign policy agenda towards it.

However, there is one particular factor that will influence a foreign state to shift its policy and acquire a conservative foreign policy, or to adopt such a policy from the very beginning: that is, if it has been defeated in a war with the state the insurgents are fighting—a factor with educational consequences for the defeated state. Hence, in this dissertation, I am assuming that the interests of certain foreign states can be detected through their conduct in war with another state; in particular, I take the experience of prior defeat to indicate or predict conservative foreign interest towards the other state. It should be noted here that whether the foreign state will

continue to support the insurgents of the victorious state is a different matter, and does not depend on its defeat in war. Some countries continue to support rebels; others cut all ties with them. In both cases, however, the foreign state has no interest in destabilizing the regime the rebels are fighting. Thus, the outcome of rebels' dependence on such a state (with a conservative agenda) is the same: reduction or elimination of the rebels' insurgent activities. Conversely, the more independent the insurgent groups—that is, the less power the foreign state has over them—the less likely it is that they be subject to the possible conservative agenda of the state supporting them. The level of insurgency of such (quasi)independent groups will then be determined by the condition of their organizational capacity (as we saw earlier) and the level of support they get from outside.¹⁴

Therefore, even the short-term consequentiality of external support for insurgency depends on the degree of leverage the external supporter has over the rebels it supports, and on the interests it has towards the enemy state. Thus, foreign support is very much related to, although quite distinct from, foreign leverage and interest. The actual international factor that increases insurgency in a country is foreign support, not leverage (even when rebels depend on an aggressive foreign state); but foreign support cannot be seen in isolation from the leverage and interest of foreign states. It is mediated by those two variables.

¹⁴ Thus, it should be noted that the question of foreign policy of states in general or that of aggressive/conservative distinction about foreign interest of states in particular is relevant only for states with high leverage over rebels. That is where the further investigation of the kind of agenda the rebel-supporting states becomes imperative. For those with low leverage, however, the question is quite simple as it just boils down to whether or not the states provide support for the rebels.

1.3 Methods and Cases

To illustrate the above-discussed arguments, I will employ a comparative study involving insurgent activities during two regimes in Ethiopia. Over the last four decades, Ethiopia has undergone multiple arrays of collective violence, two important attributes of which require mentioning here. First, this collective violence has been recorded to be one of the highest overall in the scale of intensity of civil wars in the world during the 20th century (Obermeyer et. al. 2008, 5). Second, beneath this notably high level of collective violence, however, the degree of violence has varied widely across regions (i.e., geographic areas) and regimes in the country. Some regions have been hotbeds of highly intense wars, while others have not. While the military period (1974–91) was well-known for its high intensity conflicts, the post-Dergue period (1991–present) has been relatively stable. Thus, by offering excellent cases of all four ideal types of insurgency I deal with below, post-1974 Ethiopia is a highly relevant object of study to the themes of the current work.

Hence, this work compares rebel movements involved in varying levels of insurgency over the last 40 years in order to tease out the factors responsible for those variations. In this sense, the study is a comparison on both temporal and regional levels. I investigate the differences in insurgency levels across time (i.e., visible differences between the Dergue's period [1974–91] and that of the EPRDF [Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front] [1991–present]), as well as across different regions in the country (i.e., variations in intensity and durability in some parts of the country as opposed to others) especially during the Dergue's rule. More specifically, the Dergue's period provides representative cases for all three types of insurgencies (high durability, high intensity; high durability, low intensity; and low durability, high intensity),

and the EPRDF's period is especially unique in providing cases of low durability, low intensity insurgencies.

The comparative approach I pursue in this research is close to what is called “the most similar” systems design (Anckar 2008, 1). By comparing insurgent movements that varied greatly in their levels of durability and intensity while similar in many other respects (e.g., in the underlying structural factors that generate grievance), I will investigate those variables that led to different battlefield outcomes. In accordance with the variations in their durability and intensity levels, I classify insurgencies, as already indicated above, as high intensity, low durability; low intensity, high durability; high intensity, high durability, and low intensity, low durability.

The current study employs qualitative research methods. I relied a good deal on in-depth open-ended interviews with relevant parties to collect data. During the field research, conducted in Canada and Ethiopia for about eight months beginning from June 2014, I met people of diverse backgrounds who are directly and indirectly related to my study. I specifically interviewed close to sixty opposition members and leaders, government officials, former and current members of rebel groups, intellectuals and academics, and other important personalities, keeping in mind the need to ensure regional and temporal representation in selecting informants. In Addis Ababa, Jijiga and Afar I met with six leaders of legally registered opposition parties, twenty former rebel fighters and members (from WSLF, SALF, EDU, OLF, G7 Popular, EPDM, EPRP, ARDUF and others), ten academics and researchers, two government officials, and ten former and current political activists. In Toronto, I had phone and online interviews with six (former) members of insurgent groups (affiliated with EPPF, EPDM, OLF and G7) and activists. I also met and interviewed five more rebel leaders, fighters and activists in Toronto (from OLF and EPRP). These sources authoritatively informed me of the diverse aspects of insurgency in Ethiopia

during both the Dergue's and the EPRDF's era, and in different parts of the country during both eras. The interviews were generally semi-formal but open-ended: initial pre-arranged questions posed to one or a group of these men, to which they responded as they saw fit, followed by further discussions of interest. The points of discussion ranged from the history of the insurgent movements to global, regional and local conditions, the problems they faced, casualties, organizational structures, foreign relations, and several other issues of relevance to the research. In many instances I did not audio-record the interviews (in accordance with the wishes of the informants), but instead took careful notes by hand/ computer.

As one would expect, the process of collecting first-hand data on insurgency by a researcher in an authoritarian country like Ethiopia is not easy. The Ethiopian government is wary of any attempt to meet with its armed opponents for any reason and to ascertain their perspectives on the state of politics inside the country. Especially since the passing of the anti-terror legislation in 2009—meant to target any serious opposition activity inside the country, as many observers believe—any form of connection with rebel groups could lead to a charge as serious as “terrorism”. This problem poses several difficulties for research.

The first, of course, is personal safety and security. Trying to travel and ask about insurgency in any region runs the risk of being apprehended by local security officials [indeed, I was once summoned to a Kebele (local government structure) for questioning in the capital city of the Somali Regional State, a place of relative unrest in today's Ethiopia]. This has its implications for research. Among other things, it necessitates almost going underground in the process of conducting the research. As a result, one particular dilemma I faced was whether or not to include authorities as potential interviewees, given the risk of announcing the topic of research to those authorities. I ultimately opted to avoid the risk involved in contacting top-level officials

and sought other means of obtaining the perspectives of the Ethiopian government. The latter could be accessed from numerous existing government and party publications and media outputs, as well as interviews with low-level party officials.

The second difficulty for research is that such academic endeavors also ring alarm bells among the potential informants. For instance, in the same region noted above, people were nervous to talk not just about the current condition of insurgency (that of the ONLF), but also about the past (that of the WSLF). They believe that the (regional) government is fearful that the spread of “resistance talks” could revive the spirit of resistance among the youth. Add to this the fact that I am not a resident of the region in question; hence, the potential interlocutors could not for sure tell exactly why I was in their region. It therefore took some time to earn the confidence of the ex-fighters and get information from them even about the past. The relations I carefully established with one of the local residents finally paid off. I did find that ex-fighters based in the capital, however, were not as frightened to talk about the past as their regional-based counterparts were. This was due to the relatively higher levels of stability and freedom prevalent in Addis Ababa.

With or without local connections, establishing contacts with current rebels was not practically possible from inside Ethiopia. Alternative way to gather information was not straightforward, either. Most of Ethiopia’s current rebels do not reside inside the country and are instead based in Eritrea, a country that does not welcome ordinary Ethiopians like me due to the long-standing hostility between the two countries in question. Visiting rebel bases inside Eritrea and closely observing their activities was hence not an option. Fortunately, however, many of the former combatants are also to be found dispersed across the world; establishing contacts with these exiles was the only feasible way of gathering information about rebel activity inside Eritrea.

As I anticipated, the process was not straightforward because of the sensitivity of the topic. Diaspora-based opponents of the regime are known for their suspicion of any person who does not ardently share their opposition to the regime. It would have been, hence, difficult to maintain “objectivity” in one’s conduct with the potential interlocutors. I was however lucky enough to be introduced to a few people who would understand the nature of academic research and who could introduce me to diaspora-based rebels and their affiliates, finally opening up avenues for accessing as much information as was needed to complete this project. The rebels were or still are members of Eritrean-based insurgent groups and many served in Eritrea either as political advisors of rebels or as fighters. Hence, they are well aware of the situation on the ground. They also come from diverse rebel groups as described above.

Many of the insurgent groups (especially those active during the Dergue era) relevant for this study have been examined in secondary literature, although mostly either in a more descriptive manner or in order to achieve different research objectives. Hence, I also relied on secondary sources--most of which were made available at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, but also at the Robarts Library at the University of Toronto—in order to meet my own research objectives. I benefited greatly from these institutions’ diverse collection of books, articles, and other texts dealing with different aspects of insurgency and collective violence, as well as Ethiopian history and politics.

But my field research was only the more formal and focused learning part of my research, as I have for decades been closely observing and investigating multiple issues in Ethiopian politics. Born, raised, and educated in Ethiopia, I have for a long period followed political developments both out of personal and public concern and through academic pursuits. Moreover, I had already

established solid networks of people of influence who were able to connect me to relevant informants when I embarked on the current research.

1.4 The Cases in Detail and Specific Arguments

Ethiopia's 1974–91 period was turbulent by all standards, manifested predominantly in the civil war and its great human and material costs. Notwithstanding the huge number of deaths as a result of famine (itself largely a product of the civil war) as well as inter-state war, the civil war alone was reported by the *Washington Post*'s Sanchez (May 1991) to have directly claimed around 400,000 lives.¹⁵ In their study of deaths from war injuries in 13 countries (including Ethiopia) over 50 years, Obermeyer et al. (2008, 5) disputed figures from media reports, arguing that they captured only about a third of all deaths estimated from population based surveys. They put Ethiopia only next to Vietnam as having suffered the highest numbers of war deaths in the world. The Ethiopian civil war or its adverse consequences were not specific to one time or location in the country, but were rather a persistent way of life during the entire 17 years of the Dergue's rule. They affected almost all regions of the country, although—and this is an important point—some areas felt a larger impact than others. The north, for example, saw highly intense and persistent insurgencies compared to the center, south, and southeast, which were themselves affected by insurgencies of varying degrees of intensity and persistence. Overall, the embattled authoritarian regime reigned over a “boiling pot” and made all efforts possible to keep control through repressive measures. The regime was, however, rocked by severe internal crises (including an attempted coup d'état) and was finally overthrown. It was unable to sustain internal unity and remain internally resilient, much less stabilize the country, in the face of its unrelenting

¹⁵But this is a conservative figure according to my own estimates. See Appendix.

ethnically mobilized opponents. Thus, the Dergue regime's impressive coercive capacity, demonstrated in its managing to build "the largest standing army in Africa" (Pateman 1998, 151), failed to save it in the face of its indomitable opponents.

In the post-1991 period, Ethiopia has shifted towards a relative level of stability, although still ruled by an authoritarian regime of strong military might. Under the EPRDF's rule, the civil war has been effectively ended and has so far not shown any sign of resuming. The transition from a highly chaotic and fragile political situation to one of long-lasting relative stability after the early 1990s is indeed remarkable. While some armed opposition groups claim to be operating from neighboring Eritrea, they have so far been too weak to launch any meaningful attack on the state, or even attract the attention of the wider Ethiopian public. It is also the case that a few insurgents (in particular, the Ogaden National Liberation Front [ONLF]) have managed to survive the onslaught of the regime, but their low-key engagements have so far come nowhere close to the pre-1991 levels of warfare in the major hotspots of the country. One notable form of violent conflict in post-1991 Ethiopia has been inter-ethnic skirmishes in some parts of the country, but these skirmishes have almost never targeted the center in Addis (as the pre-1991 ethnonationalists did), rather being conflicts over identity and/or natural resources.

The puzzling nature of this stability deepens when we realize that the state has by and large continued to be integrationist in its ethnic policies and deeply authoritarian, and that inequality and poverty remain quite widespread throughout the country. More interestingly, since 1991 Ethiopia has, more so than during its turbulent past, been a text-book example of an "ethnocratic" state: that is, a state overwhelmingly dominated by a core ethnic organization, the Tigrayan People Liberation Front (TPLF), that comes out of, and fought for, the liberation of a minority ethnic group that consists of no more than 7% of the country's population. Despite the

clear prevalence in the ethnically divided society of the unresolved structure of ethnic conflict and of other sources of grievance (i.e., lack of individual rights and wide-spread inequality and poverty), EPRDF's Ethiopia has witnessed a significantly reduced level of insurgency, and the regime seems rather resilient and secure when compared to its predecessor.

I argue that the divergence in the levels of insurgency both regionally (north vs. center vs. southeast) and temporally (pre- and post-1991) during the two regimes is best explained by a combination of the organizational capacity of rebels and the nature of their international connections. The most enduring and most violent insurgencies (from the Dergue period) took place where the insurgents were organizationally strong and relatively independent of external dictation—even when they received much aid from the outside. Those insurgents with weak organizations but that were totally dependent on foreign states that shifted interests from aggressive to conservative waged highly intense but low durability insurgencies. So did those with similarly weak organization and major external support but that had substantial independence from the foreign state extending the support. Insurgents that had weak organization and low foreign support, as well as low dependence on foreign states, fought a high durability and low intensity insurgency. Finally, the lowest level of insurgency on the scale (low durability, low intensity) has been conducted during the EPRDF's era by those insurgents with weak organization and a high level of dependence on a conservative foreign state. The high level of dependence is a result of post-Cold War re-alignment of global and regional alliance systems.

Table 1: Ethiopian Insurgent Groups and Insurgency Levels

		Intensity	
		Low	High
Durability	High	OLF (pre-1991)	TPLF, EPLF
	Low	OLF (post-1991), EPPF	WSLF, SALF, EDU, ELF

1.5 Significance and Contributions

The normative significance of any work on insurgency is not difficult to appreciate: it deals with issues as significant as life and death. Collective violence of any sort, and insurgency in particular, has long been a major issue of concern for all people concerned with the sanctity of human life. Cost-wise, insurgency may not be like other forms of collective violence precisely because it involves, among others, the State, the institution usually with the most lethal weapons at its disposal—quantitatively and qualitatively—and the special international legitimacy to use them as it sees fit. Although it varies from case to case, the scale of actual and potential destruction to life, property and institutions resulting from insurgent warfare is disquieting.

Seeking a better understanding of the determinants of the level of insurgency in a given society is thus of paramount importance in any quest to minimize its costs.

Apart from its normative significance, this dissertation makes six major theoretical and empirical contributions.

The most obvious and direct contribution is in the field of civil war and collective violence, the major theoretical springboard of this research due to the considerable depth which some of the critical themes of the research have been dealt with in it. Most importantly, the literature deeply engages with the durability and intensity of violence, the two defining elements of the dependent variable—level of insurgency--examined in this study. Previous works in the field have emphasized state-level, societal, informational and international factors in explaining collective violence and civil war. This study acknowledges the significance of some of these factors but considers them inadequate in explaining the level of insurgency in my cases. My research instead highlights some largely neglected variables that influence the impact of the aforementioned factors, namely rebel organizations, and the *nature* of their external relations. By doing so, the study also opens up new avenues of further research into the onset, escalation, and demise of insurgency and political violence across the world.

The role played by the external relations of rebel groups requires more emphasis here. A huge body of research on the importance of foreign support for insurgency has led many scholars to easily attribute the incidence and intensity of collective violence in some parts of the developing world in the pre-1991 era to the Cold War politics of super-power imposed proxy wars. Along the same line, the post-1991 reduction in violence in some of those countries has been explained by the end of the Cold War and its dampening effects on regional rivalry and conflict. This study

does not deny the significance of foreign support for insurgency nor does it dismiss the effects of the end of the Cold War in enabling or reducing insurgency. However, it considers foreign support-centered analyses too simplistic on their own to satisfactorily explain collective violence. Foreign state leverage and interests intermingle with foreign support in producing certain outcomes, and hence all three variables should be considered together. The considerable divergences in the scales of insurgency across cases both during and after the Cold War when foreign support is held constant call for such a more nuanced analysis.

Second, the current study makes a contribution to the nascent field of organizational theory of rebel movements. I point to a number of organizational considerations including the wider socio-cultural and identity-related conditions of the community from which the rebels draw their fighters, the socio-institutional background of rebel leaders, and the organizational choices and decisions of those leaders. This study thus examines the impact of societal and institutional factors as well as of elite choices and actions in shaping rebel organizations. The significance of such a study, in turn, is directly tied with that of level of insurgency I touched upon above.

Third, some of the above theoretical contributions—the organizational ones in particular—are very much related to two other literatures that this dissertation takes its inspirations from. Their significance should be acknowledged just as their shortcomings. Previous studies on insurgency (in contrast to those on political violence in general) and social movement theory (the resource mobilization school in specific terms) have long recognized the importance of organizations in explaining insurgency and contentious politics, respectively. Hence, I have drawn on these findings to further develop our understanding of collective violence. However, I should hasten to add that organizational variables, although long known to scholars in both fields, have been underdeveloped in the literatures. Some underdeveloped areas in both literatures include the

origins of organizational capacity and the relationship between organizational capacity and some other crucial variables in the study of insurgency such as foreign support. This research thus uses both literatures to further develop our knowledge of the role, nature and external relations of rebel organizations. In this way, it, in addition, helps build a bridge between the study of insurgency and social movement theory, two fields whose scholars have so far worked separately from each other (Wood 2015, 457) but whose insights, given their interchange, could have enriched both fields.

Fourth, this study contributes towards our understanding of the sources of durability and stability, or fragility in authoritarian regimes. While this dissertation is not directly focused on that topic, by investigating critical factors that affect political stability and change in authoritarian states, it indirectly contributes to our knowledge of the sources of their resilience or lack of it. In contrast to the dominant literature on authoritarian durability (that emphasizes state-centric variables such as institutional adaption, infrastructural power of states or state repression), this study suggests that a better explanation for the phenomenon in question should be sought in the internal condition of opposition movements, and in their external connections. What prolongs authoritarian state rule may have less to do with how that state is organized and more with how their opponents are constituted and how they run their foreign relations.

Fifth, this research sheds some light on the determinants of political stability in post-conflict societies. Much of the literature in the area of constitutional design for post-conflict states is overly technocratic and ahistorical, focusing too much on the technicalities of the kind of constitutions and political arrangements such societies design/adopt during political transitions in order to explain subsequent political processes. This study re-directs our attention to the power relations among different contestants for state power in a historical plane in order to understand

post-transition state politics. Post-conflict political (in) stability, according to this study, depends more on the degree of power (im) balance between the state and its opponents—a derivative mainly of the latter’s internal structures and external relations—in the pre-and post-transition eras, rather than on how “smartly” or otherwise legal and political designs are crafted during the transitional period. This is especially true in the case of ethnically divided societies.

A similar contribution is made to the study of mediation and negotiation. Much of the existing literature stressing the modalities and other technical aspects of mediating conflict resolution ignores the internal structure of the warring parties. Again, my research suggests that the power dynamics among them plays a more critical role in influencing conflict processes and outcomes.

Finally, this dissertation makes an important empirical contribution to the field of Ethiopian studies. There is by now a considerable amount of work on rebel movements in Ethiopia since the outbreak of the Ethiopian Revolution in 1974. Most of these works, however, suffer from two major problems. First, they tend to be descriptive and atheoretical. With few important exceptions¹⁶, they take the simple narration of the stories of rebel groups as their primary concern. They do not engage with the vast comparative literature on insurgency and civil war. Second, none of the existing major works deal with the post-1991 conditions of insurgency in the country, dealing exclusively with the insurgents during the Dergue’s regime. This research fills in these two gaps in that it is both theoretically-informed and devotes many sections to the discussion of insurgency in contemporary Ethiopia. The latter contribution is especially worth-

¹⁶The exceptions are primarily focused on just two insurgent groups, the TPLF and EPLF (for instance, Tareke 2009; Pool 2001; Berhe 2008; Young 1997). Among other things, they deal extensively with the organizational aspects of these groups. Some of the themes of this dissertation have been inspired by these studies and it has relied on them in its analyses of those two rebel organizations.

emphasizing since, as described in the methodology section, conducting field work on insurgency in present-day Ethiopia is fraught with special challenges, a major reason, one would assume, behind the dearth of research on the topic so far.

1.6 Organization

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter deals with theories of collective violence and insurgency. In it, I will lay out the contours of the theoretical context that will lead me to my theoretical framework, which is anchored mainly in organizational capacity as well as foreign support, dependence and strategic interest. In the third chapter, I will assess the significance of the different theories discussed in the second chapter to explain the reduction in collective violence in present-day Ethiopia. In this respect, I will try to rule out the value of most of the variables as either constant variables or irrelevant to the research question. The fourth chapter discusses in some detail the condition of insurgency in Dergue's Ethiopia, revealing the importance of organizational capacity as a major reason behind the regional divergences in the scale of insurgency in the country during that era. The discussion in this chapter aims to partially account for three different types of insurgencies laid out in the foregoing discussion and that were existent during this era. The fifth chapter deals with the organizational capacity of rebels vis-à-vis insurgency in EPRDF's Ethiopia. In this chapter, I will demonstrate the role of internal problems of rebel groups in weakening insurgency in the country. Finally, in the sixth chapter, I will deal extensively with the external relations of rebel groups with regard to the rebels' anti-regime activities. The chapter aims to show, through analysis of the international politics of insurgency during both the Dergue and the EPRDF eras, that while foreign support matters, it usually does so in the short-term, and its effects are

conditional on the level of rebel dependence on foreign states and the interests the latter have towards the enemy state.

Chapter 2

Theories of Civil War and Insurgency

Why do insurgents appear in one place and not another? And once they appear, why are some insurgencies more durable and deadlier than others? What explains the end of high-scale insurgency and civil war? The literature addresses these questions from different standpoints. Different sources emphasize political, economic, cultural, and international variables, all of which together form the bedrock of the general theories of insurgency, collective violence, and civil war. Below, I will briefly review the major theories of these. I will also point out a few gaps in the literature that lead me to build a theoretical framework to answer this dissertation's main question: What explains the variation in the level (i.e., duration and scale of violence) of insurgency across cases? The theoretical framework recognizes the importance of many of the variables mentioned in the literature, but primarily emphasizes rebel movements' organizational capacity and international connections (i.e., with foreign powers that purportedly support them). Crucial aspects of these two variables, I argue, have been largely neglected in the collective violence literature.

2.1 On the Onset and Intensity of Collective Violence

Some of the most notable scholarly efforts towards explaining the occurrence and intensity of collective violence have been subsumed under the oft-cited concepts of grievance and greed. One well-known example of the grievance approach is the theory of relative deprivation, which, according to its foremost advocate, refers to "actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations [goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are justifiably

entitled] and their environment's apparent value capabilities [whose referents are to be found largely in the social and physical environment]” (Gurr 1968, 252–53). According to Gurr (1968), this perceived discrepancy between legitimate expectation and actuality with respect to any collectively sought value—economic, psychosocial, political—leads to frustration, which in turn culminates in the outbreak of civil violence (Gurr 1968; 1970). Moreover, with the increase in the scale of relative deprivation, one can expect deadlier conflicts (Lu and Cameron 2011, 215). Relative deprivation has been confirmed by subsequent studies that measured its proxies, such as economic inequality, the lack of political rights, and the absence of democratic institutions, all very relevant especially in ethnically divided societies (see e.g., Fajnzylber et al. 2002; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000; Sambanis 2001; Uvin 1998). States in such societies, at times reflections of the identity/interest of some against other ethnic groups, tend to interact with the societies and distribute resources unevenly and thus perpetuate and reproduce sense of deprivation in those societies on both economic and political fronts¹⁷. One particular indicator of grievance that is quite relevant to the politics of ethnically divided societies and the theme of this dissertation is the type of policies that states pursue to manage ethnic diversity. For instance, some types of imposed integrationist state policies whereby states work—forcefully—towards unifying the political community and eliminating the politicization of ethno-cultural diversity are associated with political instability (Choudhry 2008; Bandyopadhyay and Elliott Green 2011; Zartman 2000; Kymlicka 2001). Grievance theory in general, after some decades of waning in importance among academics, has made a strong come back since recent years through studies that downplay the value of some of its contenders such as greed theory (for instance, Buhaug et. al.

¹⁷As Bertrand and Laliberte (2010, 15) put it, “Minority groups (and occasionally majority ethnic groups) sometimes felt aggrieved by state policies that seemed to exclude them”.

2013; Keen 2012; Lu and Cameron 2011; Nathan 2012). It has also become quite influential among students of constitutional design for divided societies and multiculturalism (McGarry et.al. 2008; Zartman 2000; Kymlicka 2001; Bertrand and Laliberte 2010). Grievance theory is especially credited with more relevance to studying ethnic in contrast to other types of conflicts (Sambanis 2001).

A major alternative to the grievance theory of insurgency is the greed model. According to this view, rebellion is motivated not by grievance but by greed, “which is presumably sufficiently common that profitable opportunities for rebellion will not be passed up” (Collier and Hoeffler 2004, 564). Hence, it is argued, what we should look for in explaining violent conflicts is not “motive,” but “circumstances that generate profitable opportunities” (Ibid.), such as access to finance, weak government capability, low level of social cohesion, and high level of dependence on “lootable” natural resource exports (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000.). Natural resources are especially associated with civil strife, as rebels depend on them to finance their activities (Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2001; Collier 2000) or, more generally, as these resources could create weaker, more corrupt, and less accountable governments, and also give people “who live in resource-rich regions an incentive to form an independent state” (Ross 2004, 2). More resources are related to more intense collective violence (see Ross 2004). Other opportunity costs of joining a rebellion such as rate of economic growth per capita or general economic indicators of growth (e.g., GDP)—variables that are also typically used to measure grievance—are also studied for their link to facilitating rebel recruitment (Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Gates 2002). It is important to note here that economic development is not always correlated with conflict in a linear fashion. As some studies show (e.g., Hibbs 1973), there could also be a curvilinear relationship whereby

economic development in very poor countries leads to violence, while rich countries witness less violence.

However, other scholars dispute the correlation between material resources in particular and the onset or sustenance of insurgency. In fact, the two could be indirectly proportional. According to some scholars, the discipline of insurgents, a factor critical to any viable rebel movement, could be jeopardized if access to abundant resources is widely open to the rebel group. The reason is that “as resource flows become more plentiful, insurgents become increasingly depoliticized. Involvement in illicit economies undermines organizational discipline, which leads to human rights abuses, breakdowns in command and control, and a shift toward profit over politics” (Staniland 2012, 8).

Other factors linked with the onset and intensity of collective violence include total and relative density of population, state strength (including repressive capability), political change, and rough terrain (See Gates 2002). High concentration of population (especially in urban areas) is positively correlated with high intensity civil war (Nedal et al. 2016. See also Collier & Hoeffler 2001). State capacity or state power is also of central importance in explaining authoritarian stability (or, by implication, of onset and intensity of civil war) (Andersen et. al. 2014; Hendrix 2010; Slater and Fenner 2011; Slater 2010). Two aspects of state capacity are especially emphasized in the literature (Hendrix 2010; Andersen et.al. 2014). The first is administrative/bureaucratic capacity as it relates especially to accommodating societal demands “via institutional channels”, as well as creating conducive conditions for economic growth and delivery of public goods. The more robust the administrative capacity of the state, the less the likelihood of the outbreak of civil war or, if it at all it breaks out, the less its intensity. The second-- repressive capacity—has a more complicated relationship with collective violence.

While repression is widely correlated with scale of intrastate conflict, the exact impact of repression on collective action is not clear¹⁸. One finding is that authoritarian regimes tend to suppress violence quickly before further escalation, but the application of excessive repression might trigger more violence (see Arriola 2013, 149). Other studies, however, establish that excessive levels of repression might decrease the incentive to rebel and hence reduce the occurrence of violence (Lynchbach 1987; Moore 2000). And still others find a curvilinear relationship between repression and violence (Muller 1985).¹⁹Likewise, studies have found that transition towards democracy and reversion to authoritarianism are risk factors, especially in those countries stuck between the two (Hegre et al. 2001). Finally, the other variables linked with the onset and intensity of collective violence have been subsumed under “geographic factors,” including rough terrain inside the territory of the insurgent operation and sanctuary in neighboring lands (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Rammohan et. al. 2012; Connable and Martin 2010). These factors help by (partially) shielding insurgents from the devastating impacts of state repression and giving rebels the opportunity to organize and launch strikes against their targets from a safe distance. Hence, the existence of rough terrain and sanctuary reduces the intensity of

¹⁸State repression in ethnically divided societies, the subject of this study, usually has an additional meaning attached to it and could have distinct implications of its own. (Perceptions of) who controls the state and on whom it metes out punishments are as important as the repression itself and thus affect the outcomes of a given instance of repression (See Cavanaugh 2007).

¹⁹Still some other scholars make more nuanced arguments. Tilly (2005, 224) is of the opinion that “the order in (relevant) processes does not lie in one-size-fits-all rules, but in the interplay of mechanisms, processes and initial conditions.” Repression might increase or decrease rebellion as rebels fragment and are scared away or as they fight for survival and as elites in the political system are divided (Davenport 2005). Tarrow (1994) for his part swings slightly to the negative impact of repression on collective action but affirms, as well, the counterintuitive effects thereof, i.e., its productive effects. As he puts it, “repressive states depress collective action of a conventional and confrontational sort, but leave themselves open to unobtrusive mobilization” (Tarrow 1994, 93), a sort of solidarity to be exploited in the future when circumstances allow.

collective violence by reducing the impacts of repression on insurgent activities.

The foregoing discussion has outlined some of the major factors associated with the emergence and intensification of collective violence. As factors that emphasize socio-economic, political, demographic, and geographic variables, they mainly deal with the general environment surrounding a given conflict, and hence could be construed as underlying causes and intensifiers of collective violence.

2.2 Durability of Collective Violence

Once political violence has erupted, especially in the form of civil war, several conditions can serve to prolong it. Some of these, such as low per capita income and high inequality (Collier et al. 2004), I have already mentioned as instigators of collective violence²⁰. Some of the others are also included in the list, with ethnic division being accorded a central place. In Collier et al. (2004), moderate ethnic division is associated with durable civil wars. In contrast, highly heterogeneous or homogenous societies, where inter-ethnic societal mobilization against the regime is more difficult or improbable, witness less durable civil wars. Elbadawi and Sambanis (2000) also found that ethnic fractionalization, by facilitating anti-regime mobilization, could prolong civil war. Kauffman's (1996) finding that it is more difficult to resolve ethnic conflicts than other types is in line with the implications of studies by Collier, as well as by Elbadawi and Sambanis (See Regan 2002). Fearon (2004), on the other hand, emphasizes the site of collective violence; for him, wars conducted at the center in the form of coups or revolutions are short-

²⁰One implication of these findings is that strong state capacity to promote significant and even economic development could have a dampening impact not only on the initiation and intensity of collective violence as mentioned earlier, but also on its durability.

lived since these types of anti-regime struggles “turn on the success or failure of a rapid tipping process” (p. 32). Guerilla wars, however, which are fought in the peripheries, tend to take longer since their outcome hinges on military victory or negotiated settlement. Another important factor considered is foreign involvement. Many studies (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2000, Regan, 2000, 2002) show that international support for warring parties will prolong intrastate conflict. Finally, topographic factors such as rough terrain, already mentioned above, could also be seen as contributing factors to the durability of insurgency.

Walter’s (2009) study fills a gap in the literature on civil war as a whole—that is, its initiation, durability, and ending. Walter shifts the focus of much of the literature on civil war from the “underlying structural conditions that encourage groups to go to war” to “the bargaining problems that may stand in the way of settlement” (p. 244). In filling this strategic gap, she shows that bargaining failures explain the beginnings, persistence, and prospects of recurrence of civil war. The major reasons bargains fail are information and commitment problems on the sides of both the state and its opponents.

Thus, we can conclude that the factors the literature emphasizes in explaining the durability of violent conflicts can be categorized into two groups: those that fuel, support, or maintain insurgency; and those that make reaching settlements difficult.

2.3 Ending Civil War

Finally²¹—and this is very much related to the durability of collective violence discussed above—on the question of termination of civil wars, there are two broad views. One relates

²¹Walter’s study from the previous section is also relevant here.

effective termination and peace to negotiated outcomes. An important avenue of research in this respect for ethnically divided societies is the effectiveness of power-sharing arrangements among former combatants. Many researchers affirm that such arrangements have led to democratic stability (Norris 2008) and lasting peace (Binningsbo 2005). In fact, the more prevalent the dimensions of power-sharing (economic, political, military), the more durable the peace (Hartzel and Hoddie 2003; 2007). A host of other scholars, however, disagree with these findings. Power-sharing in particular and negotiated outcomes in general are prone to falter and break down. The outcome in many cases is simply a reversion to the collective violence of the past (Spears 2013; Sriram and Zahar 2009; Tull and Mehler 2005; Toft 2010). Some of these scholars instead emphasize victory in the battlefield as an alternative form of achieving durable peace. Toft (2010), for instance, concludes that “longer-term analysis reveals that negotiated settlements have tended to lead to a greater likelihood of war and repression, whereas rebels who win civil wars seem better able to keep the peace” (pp. 35–36).

The above factors on the onset, intensity, and durability of civil war emphasize the general environment of collective violence or the underlying factors influencing it, as well as how it is or is not brought to an apparent end. As such, they do, overall, play a significant role in helping us understand the level and duration of conflicts in a given setting. However, they are deficient in that they simplify or neglect the actual processes by which these factors contribute towards inciting, intensifying, and prolonging conflict. In specific terms, they fail to consider the factor that actually transforms the underlying causes into organized struggle against the state, or they overlook the more complex workings in reality of some of the variables acknowledged in the literature. This study, in response, emphasizes two variables that have been ignored or simplified in the existing body of research and that, I argue, play critical roles in accounting for the

intensity and durability of collective violence with a specific reference to insurgency. The first is the rebel organizations²², their roles in the conduct of insurgency, and the origins of their strength and weakness. And the second set of factors deals with the international connection of rebel organizations. Although the literature gives due emphasis to foreign support, it has gravely simplified its workings and impacts as they pertain to the intensity and durability of insurgency. Foreign support is an important factor in explaining insurgency, but one that cannot alone explain the divergences in the levels of insurgency waged by different insurgent groups, where the degree of foreign support to them and a host of other domestic variables associated with igniting and prolonging collective violence are controlled for. The leverage and interests of foreign states matter as well. Below, I will discuss the role and some other aspects of rebel organizations vis-à-vis insurgency, and then examine the role of foreign support, leverage, and interest—in that order.

2.4 The Role of Organizations in the Making of Collective Violence

The first problem with most of the literature reviewed above lies in its assumption that the underlying causes of violence would in effect transform themselves into coordinated civil strife. The literature neglects the role played by the agent that gives meaning to underlying conditions, mobilizes fighters, coordinates resources, and leads the war against a given regime. As social movement theory (its resource mobilization variant in particular) underlines, grievance or greed,

²²As mentioned earlier and elaborated below, the value of rebel organizations has long been acknowledged in resource mobilization theory under the study of social movements, and also in the classical studies of insurgency and guerilla warfare. The dominant academic discourse/debate on collective violence and civil war, however, has largely neglected it. My intervention here is based on the above two literatures (social movement and guerilla warfare), which, however, I believe need to be developed further (for instance, in accounting for the origins of strong/weak organizations, and in specifying their relations with other variables, particularly foreign support) to satisfactorily understand the dynamics of insurgency. That is part of what I am trying to achieve in this study.

for instance, could be rampant in any society, but the translation of that grievance or the opportunities to rebel into collective action can be achieved only when resource *and* organizational challenges are overcome (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Zald and McCarthy 1987; Morris and Mueller 1992; Lofland 1996; Buechler 2000)²³. Moreover, grievances are usually “defined, created and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations” (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1215), and hence cannot be considered as independent variables that could explain collective action. In the words of Muller, organizational theories

either reject the assumption of a direct relationship between discontent and political violence or considers it to be weak at best, and argue alternatively that the central explanatory variable is the organization of discontent, i.e., the extent to which dissident groups are able to acquire control of the resources necessary to develop strong and effective organizations for the purpose of obtaining collective goods. (Muller 1985, 46)

In other words, the crucial point in the study of collective action (and collective violence) is neither the prevalence of grievance (as claimed by relative deprivation theory) nor the availability of resources (as asserted by the greed model), but rather the effective aggregation of those resources that are necessary to ignite sustained rebellion. From this arises the necessity for some form of organization. Resource aggregation, as Buecheler (2000, 35) explains, requires some “minimal form of movement organization without which protest will not occur.”

²³ As I have stressed in the introduction to this dissertation, scholars of social movement and those of civil war/collective violence “largely work in isolation from one another, with too few analyzing the relationship between the two forms of political opposition as instances of the broader field of contentious politics” (Wood 2015, 457). Although many have recognized this issue (Bosi and Giugni 2012; Goodwin 2012; Tarrow 2007), few have made serious efforts at bridging the gap between the two fields (for instance, Wood 2015). One important theme dealt with in these latter efforts is organizational capacity of insurgents, a factor emphasized here.

Moreover, the transformation of protests into insurgency and the intensity and durability of that insurgency are essentially related to the organizational capacity of the rebel movements. All the structural conditions that are found to affect the durability of collective violence would matter little without the presence of rebel organizations that are willing and capable of exploiting those conditions and of actually doing the fighting. Research must also move beyond analyzing the strategic factors that affect the relationship between rebel organizations and governments (as Walter 2009 does) and focus instead on the nature of the organizations and their leaders, and the role of the latter in influencing collective violence. Further, the study of the intensity and the deadliness of a given insurgency requires due emphasis on the nature and condition of rebel organizations. After all, one would expect to see more intense and deadlier rounds of fighting with state forces when stronger rebel organizations with greater capacity to coordinate and channel resources set out to threaten regime stability more seriously. Finally, the possibility of the recurrence of a terminated civil war is directly linked not only to the condition of the warring parties of the past era (as Toft 2010, for instance, assumes), but also to the organizational capacity of the multiple old rebel groups, as well as that of the new actors and social forces that have come into being following the end of the previous war. Hence, it is important to closely examine the organizational capacities of rebel movements in the study of the onset and variation of collective violence across cases.

2.5 Organizational Capacity and Insurgency

Protests require minimal forms of movement organization, as Buecheler (2000) argued, but more sustained and intense insurgency requires further organizational maturity. More durable and high-scale forms of violence have been associated with rebel groups that have a strong

organizational set up. Organizational capacity, as some highly influential theorists of guerilla warfare assert, is crucial to the making of a persistent insurgency. The works of these theorists emphasize, in different ways, the elements of internal discipline, institutional coherence, a clear chain of command, centralization, and leadership cohesiveness, arguing that without them, no guerilla army could achieve success or challenge the status quo severely. In the words of Mao ([1937] 2000, 45)], “unorganized guerrilla warfare cannot contribute to victory and those who attack the movement as a combination of banditry and anarchism do not understand the nature of guerrilla action.”

Among the many qualities of strong organization, leadership cohesion and tight command structure/centralization are considered of utmost importance—and very challenging to achieve. As Ney (1962, 30) explains,

The problem of unity is a particularly acute one for guerilla forces. Technological powers, in possession of regular armed forces . . . rarely, if ever, experience open conflict within their military establishments; unity of command in wartime is no problem for them. But guerilla movements, especially those in technologically less advanced societies, are invariably rent by factionalism.

The untoward consequences of lack of cohesion and indiscipline are great. Debray (1967, 73-74) clarifies this:

The lack of a single command puts the revolutionary forces in the situation of an artillery gunner who has not been told in which direction to fire, of a line of attack without a principal direction of attack: the attackers are lost on the field, they shoot at random, and die in vain. The amount and strength of firepower mean nothing without a plan, without

assigning a fire or cross fire. The absence of a centralized executive leadership—a political-military leadership—leads to such a waste, such useless slaughter.

Several successful guerilla movements have persistently confronted strong states by taking seriously Mao's (in O'Neil 1990, 125) advice that "without centralized strategic command, the partisans can inflict little damage on their adversaries, as without this, they can break down into roaming, armed bands, and then find no more support by the population." Insurgents ranging from Vietnamese revolutionaries to Mao's own Chinese Communists and from Eritrean nationalists to Nepalese Maoists have recognized and effectively adopted, among other things, the organizational principles of centralism, discipline, and the subordination of the military to the political command (See Tareke 2009, chapter 1). Of course, there are several other well-organized guerillas that have failed to seriously challenge their contenders, making it clear that good organization alone cannot help. Also of crucial importance are the underlying causes of grievance, effective and appropriate mobilization of the masses, availability of necessary resources, and adaptive application of guerilla warfare tactics, as the guerilla literature makes clear, and subsequent chapters of this dissertation itself selectively illustrate. But there is little doubt that it is impossible for a rebel organization to wage a high-scale and relentless anti-regime/anti-state war, especially against a robust state, without cohesion.

Some scholars have recently questioned the benefits of centralization in enabling rebels to launch effective anti-regime insurgency. They have argued, for instance, that decentralized organizational structure helps create a stronger insurgency by making it difficult for a repressive state to debilitate the rebel group (Trejo 2014, chapter 1). But others have strongly refuted this line of analysis. Johnston (2008) makes the case that "U-form" (unitary) hierarchies have a higher level of military effectiveness than "M-form (multidimensional) ones. This is because the

latter, unlike the former, tend to alter the incentive structure of rebellion by fostering internal division and fragmentation of the rebel group. Decentralized structures could serve well the interests of non-violent social movements, but a centralized, hierarchical organizational set-up, I argue, is crucial for robust insurgency.

Apart from stressing the significance of rebel organizations in the study of insurgency—which is of primary importance to the topic of this dissertation—we also need, secondarily, to address the other question discussed in the literature: that is, the origins of strong and weak organizations, especially leadership cohesion. The question to tackle here is why some rebel organizations acquire a unified structure, especially at the leadership level, while others fail to do so. In response to this crucial question of the root causes of the emergence of strong and cohesive insurgent organizations, three types of explanation emerge: institutionalist, geographic-cum-culturalist, and resource-based.

A good representative of the institutionalist line of argument is provided by Staniland (2012, 142–43), who argues that “the structure of the pre-existing social networks upon which an armed group is built determines the organizational integration or fragmentation of the group. Social ties establish how and when robust institutions can be built. . . . Insurgent organizations forged through overlapping social basest hat pull together both leaders and local communities use their ties to create strong institutions.” In contrast to this, he argues, “groups that are built atop socially divided networks cannot control or discipline the use of resources, even when they mobilize popular sentiment or draw on grassroots mobilization. Social division makes it difficult for leaders to construct robust institutions.” Staniland’s analysis specifically gives due attention to the social and institutional bases of insurgent leaders in explaining the unity or division among them (by implication within the organization) once they establish an insurgent group.

The second explanation is essentially geographic (broadly defined) in nature. According to Johnston (2008), armed groups become capable of acquiring U-form (unified) organizational structure when they are concentrated in a limited geographic space. This changes as they expand control over more and more territories; as it becomes impossible to control the activities of the expanding force from the original base of insurgency, group leaders are forced to delegate authority to subordinates. This leads to the formation of an M-form (decentralized) organizational structure. But geography alone cannot adequately explain the formation of such a structure, as Johnston (2008, 135) elaborates: “Oversight instruments, such as information and communications technology, can enhance elites’ ability to oversee subordinates. If elites can use these instruments to detect defection and to make credible threats to punish it, then they will remain able to govern U-form type hierarchies as organizations expand.” Gates (2002), while agreeing with Johnston on the importance of geography, makes an important culturalist addition to the definition of “distance.” Ethnic and ideological distance for Gates refers to the degree of ethnic and ideological homogeneity/heterogeneity within the rebel group. The more homogenous the group is with regard to these two terms, the easier it becomes to establish cohesive organizational structures.

Finally, the resource-based explanation on the origins of organizational structure is represented by Weinstein (2007), who argues that rebel groups with access to abundant resources recruit members on the basis of short-term pay-offs. On the other hand, those operating in resource poor areas can only depend on non-material elements to attract fighters. These elements include common beliefs, visions, norms, values, and trust. The impact of this difference on organizational cohesion is profound. Resource rich organizations attract “opportunistic joiners” with less commitment to the cause of the movement, and hence contributes to the formation of

less cohesive organization. Resource-poor organizations, on the other hand, recruit “activists” and “investors” with higher levels of commitment, thereby facilitating the emergence of cohesive insurgent organization.

One cannot deny the usefulness, in different contexts, of each of the above-stated approaches seeking to account for the formation of strong, unified, and coherent insurgent organizational structure. In this dissertation, I will affirm the importance of Staniland’s institutionalist and Gates’ culturalist (according to him, “geography” re-defined as “ethnic distance”) approaches, and leave out the resource-based and territorial explanations. This is because the latter two cannot explain variations in insurgent outcomes of differently resource-endowed regions and variably expansive moves of insurgent movements, respectively. In addition, I will expand on Gates’ culturalist explanation. While he focuses more on the ethnic composition of the rebel group, I, in addition to that, emphasize the homogeneity/heterogeneity of society at large that affects the internal constitution of the rebel group in which it is situated. In this regard, I analyze the possible pre-existence of a widely shared constructed sense of collective identity in the society before the birth of the rebel group, examining how this impacts the cohesion of the newly emerging group. Moreover, I will look at enforcement mechanisms insurgents put in place to ensure the discipline of their members and thereby buttress the command structure of their organizations. Finally, I will include the role of elite decisions in utilizing or passing up fertile opportunities for the creation of strong rebel organizations (especially the pre-existing sense of collective identity in the society).

My arguments can be summarized as follows. First, culturally homogenous ethnic or national groups with a pre-existing sense of collective identity facilitate the formation of cohesive organizations, while internally divided ethnic groups without any semblance of such an identity

contribute to the development, if any, of fragile organizations. Rebel groups operating in the latter environment not only find it difficult to mobilize the people they aspire to represent as one, but may also end up reproducing the intra-ethnic divisions prevalent in their constituencies within their own ranks. The reproduction of such divisions within the organization usually cripples it and hence the movement it leads. On the other hand, rebel groups mobilizing a people with strong foundations in forging a sense of cultural commonality (even when sectarian division are existent) could effectively exploit it to create not only a strong sense of nationalism among the people but also a strong and cohesive organization. It is here that the importance of progressive formation of identity becomes clear. I argue that the level of collective identity among the people at the time of an insurgency's creation is of utmost importance in the process of forging a rebel organization. The rebels will find it easier to establish a relatively cohesive insurgent organization if the people have been pre-mobilized under the banner of some collective identity. The existence of such infrastructures of identity—themselves constructed at an earlier period—solidifies the compact corporate identity of the members of the organization and enhances the capacity of the new movement to convince community members to imagine themselves as one and act together for the good of “their” identity and fellow “brethren.” In groups without any such collective background, the rebels’ work is much more cumbersome, as they have to engage, at the same time, both in teaching their people they are one community and fighting a brutal war with their enemies.²⁴

²⁴ I should also add here that population size matters, too. A large population found dispersed along a vast chunk of territory poses a huge challenge for rebels, especially in their efforts to successfully coordinate and integrate their activities. This becomes especially true in less technologically advanced societies where day-to-day coordination of activities requires geographical proximity of guerilla leaders.

Second, leaders who shared a socio-institutional background before the constitution of the rebel group will be more likely to form a cohesive leadership. Leaders with common roots in educational, political, or cultural settings know each other well and can capitalize on their similarities. On the other hand, if they lack common background, then the possibility of internal division is more likely.

Third, when cultural and institutional conditions for building strong organizations and mobilizing people to pursue insurgent goals are all met, it is left for insurgent leaders to make use of these conditions for successful ends. This leads to the importance of elites and the choices they make. This factor is crucial in explaining variance in the success or failure of organizational build-up when other enabling conditions are fully present. For instance, rebel leaders could (knowingly or otherwise) directly sow the seeds of division in the organization even when societal factors are conducive to forming a centralized group. Even those leaders operating among people who already share a sense of collective identity constructed prior to insurgency, may decide—for any number of reasons—to incorporate tribal, religious or clannish sectarian influences into the rebel structure, in this way adding a potentially debilitating force. In addition to the institutionalist and culturalist explanations, then, the agential role of elites is significant in understanding the origins of strong organizations²⁵.

²⁵ In order to avoid any sense of tautology, it is important to further clarify the relationship between existing sense of popular identification and mobilizational work by rebel organizations vis-à-vis buttressing organizational cohesion. With regards to the socio-cultural conditions of the people that influence organizational coherence, there are two traits that need emphasis: degree of sectarian division and degree of widespread sense of common identity among the people. The kind of society that makes it very hard for rebels to mobilize and build strong organization is that with multiple and deep sectarian divisions *while at the same time* lacking any widely shared sense of identification. In this situation, however much rebel leaders try to transcend divisions and forge unity among the people and establish coherent rebel organization, they tend to fail in their efforts. However, in those situations where sectarian

Finally, strong organizations put enforcement mechanisms in place to ensure discipline is maintained. The degree to which organizations cultivate the discipline of their members is dependent on the enforcement mechanisms they use to achieve their desired goals. In order to obtain the loyalty and discipline of their fighters, strong rebel groups offer rigorous training and also put in place strong intelligence and punishment mechanisms to weed out infractions. They have absolute control over their members and turn them into dedicated full-time fighters. As part of these efforts, they pay special attention to the dangers of internal dissent, especially at the top level. Insurgent leaders recognize the ill effects of internal dissent and fragmentation, and work hard to avoid them. One mechanism employed to weed out any internal opposition is the use of force. In-group repression, however, will only work under one condition: that leaders act swiftly when they are in agreement about impending danger and take action only when such an agreement is reached. This argument assumes that violent routing of dissent can only be effective when the dissent is not extensive or deeply entrenched. As O'Neill argues (1990, 105), the "recourse to coercion may succeed if the recalcitrant individuals and groups are relatively small and impotent. But if dissident groups are sizable and have enough resources to threaten prolonged and costly fighting, larger mail-line groups often avoid using coercion to ensure unity."

It is hence a combination of the condition of collective societal identity/homo-heterogeneity, the presence/absence of shared elite institutional base, elite choices, and enforcement mechanisms

divisions co-exist with pre-existing sense of collective identity, it is up to the elites to either capitalize on the latter and succeed, along with other relevant factors, in further strengthening that identity and forging strong organization, or hark on sectarian divisions and consequently weaken the rebel group. Hence, both societal and agential factors affect popular identity but they have their own distinct roles to play in that respect.

that determine the emergence of strong organization with cohesive leadership and tight/centralized command structure. If any of these elements is missing in a rebel organization, the group will tend to lose its strength and join the category of “weak” organization.

2.6 International Connections: Foreign Support, Dependence, and Interests

Apart from organizational capacity, the other set of variables that the literature underdevelops/neglects—and that I will give due emphasis below—is related to the international connections of insurgents. I will aim to situate my arguments in the literature and show how foreign support alone, contrary to widely-held belief, does not in itself explain important aspects of insurgency, but that, instead, foreign state leverage and the interests of foreign supporters also play a role. I will also here establish a relationship between organizational capacity and foreign support.

Many observers and students of insurgency emphasize the importance of foreign support for warring parties, especially for rebel groups. Over four decades ago, Gurr (1968, 277) proposed that “intervention on behalf of the deprived is likely to strengthen group support and may, as well, heighten and intensify value expectations. “Ever since then, a host of works have dealt with these themes with some depth, giving special emphasis to the importance and at times necessity of outside support for rebel groups. States provide support in various forms, including money, arms, and training of rebel armies. They also provide sanctuary for rebels to hide in the event of state repression inside the territory in which they operate. On the diplomatic front, states can assist rebels in many ways, for example, in representing “their cause in international fora and with major powers” (Byman et al. xiv).

The significance of some as opposed to other types of support to rebel groups is debated in

academic circles, however. For instance, Collier et al. (2001; 2004) find that economic support for either rebels or governments and military aid for governments are not significant, while military support for rebels is. Regan (2002) endorses the importance of outside intervention, arguing instead that opposing interventions prolong the conflict while biased intervention shortens it. Hence, for Regan, both military and economic, and pro-rebel and pro-government supports matter. According to Byman et al. (2001), four forms of assistance are either essential or very useful for insurgents: provision of safe havens (sanctuary); money; political and diplomatic support; and direct military support, whereby state armies fight alongside the insurgents. Other forms of support, including offering training, weapons, and intelligence services, could be valuable at times but are not essential or even very useful for the building up of strong insurgency.

The dominant knowledge in the field is that interventions on either side impact both the intensity and durability of the supposedly “local” conflict. Intrastate conflicts with outside interventions “last longer, cause more fatalities and are more difficult to resolve through negotiations” (Salehyan et al. 2011, 710). This assumption has dominated both academic and policy-making circles especially during and after the Cold War, whereby the potency of some of the more perennial insurgencies in some of the world’s hotspot regions have been closely associated with outside support (see Legum and Lee 1979; Schmidt 2013).

The problem with arguments that establish a strong relationship between foreign support and the durability/intensity of “local” conflicts is that they do not take into consideration the wide variations in the level of insurgency in different countries or different regions within the same country when the degree of foreign support is similar across cases (and other relevant domestic variables are held constant). In order to account for these variations, we need to introduce certain

other variables and modify the significance attached to foreign support. The overall thrust of the argument pursued here is to shift from a more simplified to a more complex view of how foreign support works in influencing insurgent activities in a given country.

This dissertation will make three arguments with respect to explaining the durability and intensity of insurgency vis-à-vis foreign support.

First, I will affirm, in line with the dominant knowledge, that foreign political, military, economic, and intelligence support are important contributors in intensifying insurgency in a given country. Clearly, groups—however disorganized—will have a heightened capability and motivation to strike government targets as soon as abundant resources flow into their hands. Thus, foreign support is independently useful especially in explaining the emergence of rebel forces, regardless of their organizational coherence, as viable movements in their homeland. Its absence, conversely, contributes to a reduction in the scale of insurgency, especially where rebel organizations are weak. Thus, the decline since 1991 in the level of insurgency in some parts of previously war-torn regions of the global south can to some extent²⁶ be related to the post-Cold War change in the politics of “proxy-wars” and the implications of that change to regional stability.

Second, while foreign support may help start and intensify insurgency in the initial stages, it does not necessarily help to sustain it for long. In the medium- and especially the long-term, an

²⁶ “to some extent” because, as we will briefly see immediately below and in chapter 6 in more detail, satisfactorily explaining reduction of insurgency is a more complicated task than just attributing it to lack of foreign support. As the empirical chapter shows, the post-Cold War re-alignment of power relations among states precisely explains high foreign state leverage over rebels, the variable that in turn, along with foreign state interest and organizational capacity of rebels, directly accounts for the reduction of insurgency in the cases analysed.

insurgent group's power to wage war against the state or even to survive as an organization is largely dependent on its own internal sources of strength. Weak rebel organizations, as I have already argued, can upgrade their insurgency with the massive influx of resources from outside for a while. The more prolonged the conflict, however, the more difficult it is for fragmented groups to sustain the struggle, as they begin to break down due to internal weaknesses exacerbated by government repression/attacks or by other more organized rebel groups. Resource-rich insurgency has no guarantee of durability. There are currently few studies that affirm this contention (see, e.g., Connable and Libicki 2010, and to some extent Byman et al. 2001). They emphasize that the core variable that ultimately seals the fate of rebel groups is internal, not external, to the rebel movement. They argue that outsiders can help ignite or sometimes sustain the rebellion, but "most of the burden inevitably falls on insurgents themselves" (Byman et al. 2001, xix). There is a good logic behind the primacy of organizational strength over external support or resource flow to rebels in general. How and to what end material resources in the hands of rebel groups are used very much depends on the organizational nature of these groups. Resources in and of themselves cannot be meaningfully linked to the strength or weakness of the groups. As Paul Staniland (2012, 153–54) recently argued, when resources in general enter "integrated organizations," "they flow along robust lines of both social and organizational loyalty and monitoring, thus disciplining and mitigating the lures of material gain." Such rebel organizations "should not suffer from looting and indiscipline"; they "deploy resources for political and organizational tasks rather than becoming a band of greedy thugs." On the other hand, internally divided rebel groups offer their leaders limited possibilities of creating institutional mechanisms "to motivate and monitor commanders and fighters, making it more likely that resources will become objects of contestation and

sources of indiscipline.” Hence, instead of becoming a source of power for the group, resources at the disposal of fragmented groups prove to be a liability that further intensifies the already existing organizational problems within it. And if resources do not exacerbate the internal problems of weak organizations, they also cannot help mend those problems. Problems such as deep ideological or interest-based divisions within the leadership, the creeping of clannishness or tribalism within the organizational structure of the rebel group that shatters its organizational coherence and unity, or the sustained lack of discipline among its ordinary fighters do not arise due to lack of material resources (including weapons), nor can they be fixed by amassing them.

Thirdly, I contend that when it works, foreign support is dependent on two closely related factors: foreign state leverage and foreign state interest. The higher the degree of control a foreign state (which is a supporter of the rebels) has over the affairs of the rebels, the more vulnerable they become to its dictates and the greater their dependence on its interests when it comes to intensifying the insurgency in their homeland. If the foreign state promotes an aggressive foreign policy towards the enemy state, the rebels will be able to step up their insurgency; if, however, its foreign policy is conservative,²⁷ then they will be forced to pull back

²⁷ As we saw in the introduction, this is a result of a crisis situation in which the foreign state finds itself and which is a result of defeat in the hands of the state the rebels fight. Hence, also at loggerheads with the state that insurgents target (enemy state), the external supporter of the insurgents may not, however, be interested in helping them actually destabilize the enemy state if it believes that such support for the rebels could result in a heavy retaliatory attack by that enemy state on the external backer, an attack that the backer will not be able to endure. After the defeat, however, the conservative state may desist supporting the rebels or it may continue with its support, rendering foreign support distinct from the conservativeness of the foreign agenda of states. One might wonder why a state that has a conservative policy towards a country will at the same time provide support for rebel groups that fight that same country. There could be some reasons for this ironic state policy, as we will see in the empirical chapter. One important logic behind supporting the insurgents of the other state would just be to get some concessions—military, economic or territorial—from the enemy state. In such cases, a state could support the opponents of another within a strictly limited framework. When insurgents gain too much power, they could be seen as threat to the interests of the state allegedly allied to them. This sense of threat could in turn lead that threatened state (their external supporter) to undermine the rebel groups most effectively by, for instance, weakening their

their insurgency. On the other hand, the lower the leverage a foreign state has on rebel groups, the more dependent their battlefield lot is on their own internal (organizational) strength and the degree of foreign support they have. If they have high foreign support, they will be able to intensify their war (regardless of their organizational capacity), which means their condition will be somewhat similar to that of rebel groups that depend on an aggressive foreign state (as we saw above). Thus, even the relationship between short-term/initial escalation of insurgency and foreign support is dependent on two conditions: the degree of foreign leverage over rebels and foreign interests towards the state the rebels fight. The more dependent the insurgents are on their foreign backer for their financial, military, professional, logistical, and other needs, the more vulnerable they become to its whims and dictates. Insurgents whose fighters are harbored in, trained, armed, and fed by one country and who are willing or forced to involve that country in recruiting fighters, designing strategies, disseminating propaganda, and punishing dissenters operate in the riskiest of circumstances. When it is in the interest of the foreign country to help initiate insurgency in another country, they succeed in challenging the status quo. But in cases where the country disapproves of any anti-regime movement in the other country, the rebels are bound to remain ineffective.

2.7 Theoretical Framework: A Summary

The above discussion has emphasized two sets of independent variables—organizational capacity of rebels, on the one hand, and foreign support, leverage and state interest, on the other—by way of explaining the level (i.e. durability and intensity) of insurgency across cases. In this section, I will outline some combinations of durability and intensity representing the different possible

organizational capability. We will see empirical examples in the chapter on foreign support and foreign leverage.

manifestations of the diverse levels of insurgency, in order to show how certain combinations of my independent variables can explain each one of those manifestations of levels of insurgency.

The independent variables interact in certain diverse ways to affect the levels of insurgency. I will consider four different levels of insurgency on the basis of the two indicators of that dependent variable: (1) low-durability, low-intensity;(2) low durability, high intensity;(3) high durability, high intensity; and (4) high durability, low intensity. Each these scenarios is the result of a specific set of interactions among the independent variables. The first scenario—of low durability, low intensity insurgency—could be a result of weak organization and high level of dependence (i.e., high leverage) on a given foreign backer²⁸that happens to be conservative in its foreign policy, that is, that has a low level of interest in destabilizing the regime the insurgents are fighting. The second scenario—low durability, high intensity insurgency—is an outcome of the combination of either (i) weak organization and a high level of dependence on a foreign state with an aggressive agenda that later becomes conservative; or (ii) weak organization and a low level of dependence on foreign states but high foreign support. The third scenario—high durability, low intensity—is a result of weak organization coupled with relative independence from foreign influence and also low foreign support. Finally, the fourth scenario—high durability, high intensity— results when strong organization meets high foreign support but with relative independence from foreign dictates.

²⁸ Its support for rebels could be high or low; it does not matter.

Table 2: Levels of Insurgency and Variables Explaining their Occurrence

		Intensity	
		Low	High
Durability	High	Scenario Three -weak organization -low foreign support -low leverage of foreign state	Scenario Four -strong organization -high foreign support -low leverage of foreign state
	Low	Scenario One -weak organization -high/low foreign support -high leverage of a conservative state	Scenario Two -weak organization -high foreign support -high leverage of an aggressive state that later turns conservative OR low leverage of foreign state

As the foregoing discussions in this chapter make clear, the degree of intensity of insurgencies is a function of strong/weak organizational capacity, high/low foreign support, and high foreign leverage (foreign state interest could be either aggressive or conservative). These factors affect the intensification or absence of insurgency either in the short- or long- term. On the other hand, the degree of durability of insurgencies is a function of, again, strong/weak organizational capacity, low foreign leverage, or high foreign leverage (when foreign state interest is conservative). Foreign support per se and high foreign leverage with aggressive interest are not

good predictors of the degree of the durability of insurgency.

Chapter 3

Collective Violence and Insurgency in Post-1974 Ethiopia: Rival Explanations

In this chapter, I will discuss the degree to which the different explanations offered in the literature on insurgency and collective violence help us understand variations in the level of insurgency in Ethiopia. As I will argue, most of them are inadequate to account for the difference in the degree of collective violence the country has seen for the last 40 years. While some can be taken as control variables, others can be rejected outright for being inapplicable to our case. I will analyze the most relevant variables that could explain the research question in the next chapters.

Ethiopia's recent past has varied dramatically in terms of the level of insurgency the country has witnessed. The post-1974 period was marked by intense socio-political upheaval that lasted unabated until a regime change in 1991. The Ethiopian Civil War, as it came to be known, lasted for 17 years and claimed the lives of over 550,000 combatants and well over a million other lives for reasons directly related to the civil war, such as famine. No less than 12 active insurgent groups operated in their respective areas and engaged the government in several bloody wars. But the level of insurgency experienced by different regions of Ethiopia varied greatly. The bulk of the Ethiopian Civil War was conducted in the northern highlands and instability was persistent throughout the military rule. The southeastern/southwestern fronts also experienced long-standing instability but the intensity of the political violence was much lower here than in the north. The far eastern region went through a sharp rise in the intensity of violence but that

violence broke rather quickly and the Ethiopian regime managed to ensure political stability in the region thereafter.

The post-1991 era, on the other hand, is largely representative of a political order notably different from the previous one. The hallmark of its difference lies in the maintenance of relative peace and stability in the country for over two decades. Ethiopia under the new regime has been conspicuous, among other things, for a sharp decline in insurgency and civil unrest. Post-1991 Ethiopia has by no means been a paragon of peace and stability, and there have still been violent confrontations between government forces and opposition movements at different times and in different regions of the country. There are still over nine self-proclaimed insurgent groups vying to overthrow the regime; however, most have been unable to mount any serious challenge to the regime's broader interests of securing regime/national security. Some reports of armed clashes between government forces and insurgents have been heard, but most of these clashes have been short-lived and the more durable ones have not been very costly in terms of claiming combatant lives. According to some estimates,²⁹ the overall casualty from the low-scale fights over the last 24 years could be anywhere between 2500 and 3500 deaths. The overall reduction in the intensity and durability of insurgency is notable.

What explains these regional and temporal variations in the scale of insurgency in Ethiopia since the 1970s? While in later chapters I will argue that organizational and international factors can largely explain the variations, in this chapter I will mainly focus on my control variables and alternative explanations. As seen in the theoretical chapter, most of the explanations offered to account for the onset, intensity, and durability of collective violence are either underlying causal

²⁹ See appendix for sources and elaborations.

factors or related to negotiations between the warring groups and ending of conflicts. In this chapter, I will consider few major explanations from both in connection to my empirical case. A major explanation—and underlying cause—that needs to be ruled out before affirming the importance of my chosen variables is grievance³⁰. Hence, I will first control for this variable by showing that it has been rampant under both regimes and across different regions of the country. I will then consider a few other major alternative explanations—including those concerning ending conflicts—and shortly demonstrate that they cannot strongly explain the variation in insurgency in Ethiopia.

3.1 Sources of Grievance in Pre- and Post-1991 Ethiopia

I will first examine the relevance of three major sources of grievance in explaining varying levels of insurgency in post-1974 Ethiopia. I will see difference and similarity, as well as change and continuity, in the integrationist and autocratic policies of the state and in the level of poverty and economic inequality³¹. My aim is to show that there have been some changes in some of these factors especially across time, but that these changes are not significant enough to meaningfully explain the incidence of insurgency at variable degrees in the country's recent past. Since multiple sources of grievance, however, have been quite prevalent across regions and during both regimes, this factor should be taken as a control variable.

³⁰As indicated in the theoretical chapter, grievance theory has recently re-gained momentum among conflict and peace scholars, especially those interested in ethnically divided societies.

³¹ In addition to the degree of prevalence of grievance in the society, part of what this section tries to accomplish is the examination of change and continuity in the state's administrative and developmental capacity as it relates to collective violence. See theoretical chapter for the significance of state capacity in this respect. The other major element of state capacity, repression, is dealt with further below in this chapter as it relates to the Ethiopian case.

3.1.1 Response to Ethnic Division

A major source of grievance that was rampant throughout post-1974 Ethiopia was the integrationist policies of the Ethiopian state. The Marxist government inherited from its predecessor the nationalist rhetoric of “unity” among Ethiopians and put in place a highly centralized and oppressive state structure that criminalizes ethnic nationalism. The post-1991 regime, the EPRDF, made some changes to the discourse and politics of managing ethnic division in the country, but in the end has not resolved the structure of ethnic and nationalist grievance in the country. As managing ethnic division has undergone *generally* cosmetic changes over time, the continuity of the integrationist tendency of the state is remarkable.

3.1.1.1 Response to Ethnic Division: Pre-1991

One of the most important defining features of Ethiopian politics since the 1960s has been the “national question.” Originating in post-colonial Eritrea, the national question started to influence oppositional politics in the later years of Haile Sellasie’s Ethiopia. The Eritreans, as will be elaborated in the next chapter, haunted by their colonial past, began to demand self-rule after their annexation to Ethiopia in 1961. Their demands reverberated across Ethiopia through the agency of the burgeoning Ethiopian intellectuals of the time, who were further influenced by international Marxist movements that propounded self-determination as well as by the euphoria of decolonization all over Africa. The issue of self-determination and ethnic rights took center stage during the heyday of the Ethiopian student movement of the 1970s. Elites from almost all of the major ethnic groups in the country publicly announced their antipathy towards the Amhara-dominated rule of the last seven centuries, which was seen as oppressive and destructive

of other ethnicities in the country. Along with the prevalent feudal land tenure system, the national question played the most important basis for anti-imperial mobilization.

The downfall of the imperial system exacerbated the demand and struggle for self-determination of nations in Ethiopia. A host of ethnic liberation movements mushroomed in different parts of the country and began to mobilize their constituencies. The new regime, a Marxist military junta, at first tried to ease the tensions, but finally closed off the system towards such demands. On the one hand, in the marginalized southern part of the country, the Dergue declared the much-awaited “land to the tiller” policy barely a year after coming to power; it took away the land from the landlords and gave it back to the peasants, who happened to belong to the oppressed ethnic groups in the country. Moreover, the military junta tolerated some cultural and linguistic manifestations of diversity such as the use of local languages for certain limited official purposes, including propaganda works. On the other hand, the new regime, not unlike the imperial one before it, criminalized ethnic-based political mobilization and kept the integrationist Amharicization policy intact. Apart from overall linguistic homogenization, the Dergue pursued many of the nation-building strategies mentioned by Bandyopadhyay and Green (2011) such as change of currencies, conscription and national service, centralization, one-party state, non-ethnic census, and land re-distribution (although it had additional reasons for taking some of these measures). Moreover, just like its predecessor, it subscribed to the Ethiopian nationalist ideology that glorifies the “uninterrupted, independent, unified and antique” past of Ethiopia, which has been preserved as a result of “heroic” kings who have “passed down to us a great nation. “Any ethno-nationalist project, it believed, undercuts this “unified” nation, and hence is not tolerable in the new order of things (see Gudina 2001, 7-8). This integrationist response to ethnic and nationalist demands was a major source of grievance among a wide-range of

Ethiopians and contributed greatly to the multiplication of waves of rebel movements in the country, as I will show in the next chapter.

In addition to its integrationist response to ethnic division, the authoritarian nature of the military junta was its other major disadvantage. As well-recorded in previous works (Lefort 1983, chapter 5; Young 1994, 160, 271, 294; Tiruneh 1993, 173-205; Markakis and Ayele 1978, 99-101), many of the insurgent groups that were active in the country in the 1970s demanded democracy or democratic rights in one form or another in addition to any other item in their programme (ethnic rights, land ownership etc.). For instance, the foremost demand of the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party, EPRP, the most important urban-based insurgent group that was active in the 1970s, was the establishment of People's Provisional Government. Among one of its core principles, on the basis of which it galvanized the youth from every walk of life, was to extend democratic rights to all ("democracy without limit"), that is, not only to the oppressed masses but even to the "reactionary" forces (Tiruneh 1993, 150-151). Many youths that were expecting the establishment of civilian rule and democracy after the overthrow of the imperial regime became disillusioned by the negative turn of events in the aftermath, and either played a prominent role in forming some of the rural-based insurgencies or joined them later on (Young 1997, chapters 4 and 5). Indeed, the authoritarian style of rule and responses of the Dergue to the demands of the people contributed in many ways to intensifying popular grievance and struggle to bring down the regime.

There was no significant regional variation in the mode of state response to ethnic division or popular demand during the pre-1991 times. Ever since the 19th-century Menelikan conquest and the creation of modern Ethiopia, the state had made nationalizing, integrationist, and authoritarian moves into all corners of the Ethiopian periphery. The state had strenuously

worked, at times violently, to subjugate and assimilate the non-Amhara peoples of the country. If anything, the southern periphery—much of which saw little effective insurgency in the post-1974 period—suffered more than its northern counterpart. The newly conquered areas of the south completely lost their (semi)independence and were forcefully incorporated into the Ethiopian state system. Political incorporation was followed by not only forceful attempts to culturally assimilate the people, who shared neither the language nor the religion of the ruling class, but also extensive exploitation of the resources of those people under the *naftagna gabbar* system, “through which the armed settlers (the *naftagna*) extracted labour from the peasants, reducing them to a state of quasi-serfdom (*gabbar*)” (Kassam 2003, 5).

Although centralized Amhara rule also prevailed in the north, the degree of centralization there, especially in Tigray, was not the same. Tigray, the homeland of one of the strongest insurgencies in the 1970s and 1980s, has never been a conquered entity. It has instead consistently constituted historic Ethiopia (Abyssinia) and shared culture and religion with the Amhara. After the Amhara, Tigrayans were the only legitimate claimants of state power in Ethiopia before 1974 because of their historic and direct connection with the Axumite kingdom of the first millennium. Although the throne was for the most part of the last second millennium a sole prerogative of the Amhara, Tigrayans prevailed before that and even had the chance to rule Ethiopia for a part of the 19th century as king of kings of the entire country as it existed during that time. True, the fact that they lost the regal prerogative after 1889 (end of rule of Yohannes the 6th)—and the consequent political and economic marginalization of Tigray—continued to upset the Tigrayan political elite to the end of the imperial era in 1974, but that is a hugely different order of grievance from that of the various ethnic groups in the periphery. As a result of its volatility, successive emperors, especially the last one, Haile Sellasie, treated Tigray with “deference and sensitivity” (Tibebu

1995: 173) Under their rules, “Tigray was on average one among equals, sometimes more, sometimes less equal than others... [Haile Sellasie] established political bonds with the Tigrayan aristocracy through royal marriages. Tigray was left with a wider margin of regional autonomous space than any other, save perhaps Afarland” (Ibid.). The region that brought forth one of the most formidable insurgencies in Ethiopia, hence, was not the one that suffered most from integrationist tendencies of the state. On the eve of the TPLF’s birth, Tigray was not politically, culturally, or religiously more alienated than the more overpowered southeast that gave birth to weaker insurgencies.

The Dergue’s rule solidified the centralization process almost all over the country (Clapham 1989, chapters 5 and 6; Lefort 1983, chapter 4; Zewde 2001, 236-256). By refining the local administrative structures of the state, the military junta spread its tentacles across the entire country down to the lowest level, and proceeded to execute the nation-building project and its variant of socialist transformation as far as it could. Faced with a growing wave of insurgency throughout the country, the Dergue finally agreed in 1988 to establish six autonomous regions in the north and southeastern parts of the country where rebel movements were active. However, without implementing its new policies, the regime was overthrown by its northern antagonists. Thus, in terms of the implantation of forceful integrationist policies, the pre-1991 period carried no practical regional variations from which one could infer about variations in insurgency levels.

3.1.1.2 Response to Ethnic Division: Post-1991

Rhetoric

How has the EPRDF/TPLF responded to the ethnic division in the country? How has it approached the “national question”? The EPRDF’s approach to ethnic management has been

somewhat different from that of the previous regimes in that it rhetorically valorized and went to some lengths to implement the approach to managing ethnic diversity called “accommodation” (see Aalen 2002, chapter 5; Turton 2006, 1-32; Tronvol 2000, 15; ICG 2009, 3-4; Abbink and Hagman 2013, 583-590). The ruling party’s multiculturalist project mainly manifested itself in the institutionalization of ethnic politics in the country. This has taken four forms.

The first of these was the inducement of an ethnically engineered³² party politics that led to the fast proliferation and domination of ethnic-based parties in/of the national and local political landscape. Out of the 29 political parties that attended the 1991 conference (the “July” or “Addis Ababa Conference”) that laid the foundation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, only six had a name that bore the word “Ethiopian” and drafted a national vision and agenda. All the rest stood to represent the different ethnic groups in the country. Although some more new Ethiopian nationalism-invoking parties emerged later on, and a few managed to fare well in mobilizing a solid number of people in the towns, their impact has always been transient; ethnic parties still form the bedrock of Ethiopian politics.

The second form of institutionalizing ethnic politics was a tendency towards the actual sharing of power with some ethnic opposition groups during the transitional period from 1991 to 1993. During this period, the EPRDF’s partners-in-power included the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (an insurgent group that fought the Dergue as did the TPLF) and the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), itself consisting of many ethnic-based organizations, all

³²The EPRDF, due to its relative power over the post-Dergue state, was the major force behind the whole process during the transition period: the calling of conferences, the choosing of participants, the setting of agendas, the passing of decisions on major national issues and the enforcement of those decisions. See further below as well as chapter five.

unarmed. These groups were given and kept ministerial portfolios until they left the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) in 1992 (OLF) and 1993 (SEPDC). The internal makeup of the EPRDF may also give, at first sight, the impression of being a kind a “consociational party” (Bogaard’s 2005), one constituted by different communal groups that more or less equally share power. It consists of four different political organizations that purportedly represent the Amhara (Amhara National Democratic Movement), Oromo (Oromo People Democratic Organization [OPDO]), Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Region (Southern Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Front [SEPDF]), and Tigrayan (TPLF) ethnic groups.

The third form was through the proportionality in the allocation of seats in the House of Federation³³ and the reservation for minority ethnic groups of some specific seats (20 out of 550) in the House of People’s Representatives, which can be construed as instances of proportional representation.

Finally, and most importantly, was the installation of radical ethnic-based federalism (“segmental autonomy” in the word of consociationists), which supposedly granted its constituent units not only the right to administer themselves (and with veto powers) but also to secede from the mainland. The units, called *kilils*, were constitutionally invested with their own executive, legislative, and judicial powers and had the constitutional privilege to sustain and cultivate their own cultures and languages freely. The *kilils* were initially promulgated to be 14, but in 1994 were reduced to nine (plus two chartered cities) through the merging of some

³³Article 61 of the Constitution reads: 1. The House of the Federation is composed of representatives of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples 2. Each Nation, Nationality and Peoples shall be represented in the House of the federation by a least one member. Each Nation or Nationality shall be represented by one additional representative for each one million of its population.

southern ethnic communities into one and the forming of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region. The implantation of and institutional protection granted to the use of mother tongue/local languages for not only local administration but also education, a fact considered by some to be contrary to the practices of past regimes in Ethiopia, is especially hailed by some observers for “helping oppressed minorities to gain recognition and to develop confidence in their language and culture” (Frank 2009, 6).

It can be said, therefore, that the EPRDF-led state has at least demonstrated its eagerness to appear as having operated along the consociational type of multicultural accommodation (in all its four components of grand power sharing, proportionality in representation, segmental autonomy, and mutual veto). These strategies of accommodation are apparently at odds with those of the previous regime.

State Practice

“Coalition” and Representation under Party Control

When seen from the angle of actual state practice, however, the difference in the state regulation of ethnic division between the two regimes is not that impressive. Rhetoric aside, some major aspects of the “accommodationist” path of the EPRDF have been repeatedly neutralized in practice by the integrationist moves of the state (see Vestal 1999; Abbink and Hagman 2013, 5-8; Tronvol 2000, 25-30; Tronvol and Vaughan 2003, 134; Gudina 2003; Jalata 2005, chapter 8; Markakis 2011, 280-282). The “grand coalition,” first, has not been among contenders or equals but between superiors and subordinates in the case of in-party politics and between superiors and feeble rebels in the case of inter-party coalition. Many independent observers, as well as some active and former members of the EPRDF, unquestionably affirm that the TPLF has a

disproportionate share of power in the ruling party and its members overwhelmingly control all major decisions about the country as well as critical governmental posts (such as those related to the military, the intelligence, and the economy). “The Ethiopian experience,” as Mengisteab (2007, 88) puts it, “where the TPLF has created parties from other identities and forged a coalition under its wings, has resulted in hierarchical relations within the coalition.” The perception, moreover, that the TPLF actually rules Ethiopia and that the other members of the Front are simply auxiliaries to the TPLF hegemony, is arguably quite prevalent among different sections of the public in many regions of the country (Ibid.). It is now quite common knowledge among ordinary Ethiopians that “since 1991, the Tigray ethnic [sic] replaced the Amhara ethnic [sic] in Ethiopia” (Ali 1996, 73), or more aggressively that “the Tigray [sic] have simply taken the place of the Amhara as the tribal dictators of Ethiopia” (McCracken 2004, 198).

This disproportionate share of power by the TPLF within the EPRDF, as we will see elsewhere, could be explained by a resort to pre-1991 history of the rebel organizations. The TPLF had become a formidable military organization by the time it decided to enter into a formal coalition with the other forces fighting the Dergue. It actually decided to do so while it was shedding its Tigray-centered dream and started to entertain an expansionist agenda, virtual outcomes of military victories and the attendant boost in self-confidence. But safely controlling other lands requires securing the help of organizations constituted by people hailing from those lands, as direct Tigrayan expansion into these lands would ignite popular resistance against the TPLF.³⁴ Where such organizations had already existed and were found to be content with a subservient role, a “coalition” was formed. Such was the case with the Amhara-dominated Ethiopian People

³⁴ As it turned out, despite its best efforts, the TPLF-led regime could not manage to create a state structure that appeared truly representative in the eyes of the wider section of the population.

Democratic Movement, EPDM (later ANDM), an offshoot of the EPRP, whose military wing was defeated by the TPLF in 1978 (ex-EPDM leader, online interview, June 2014). Throughout the struggle against the Dergue, the EPDM was closely and frequently assisted by the TPLF (Asaye 2013). Although it had a somewhat independent existence before 1988, the EPDM was practically a “junior partner” of the TPLF ever since it launched its own insurgency in early 1980s (ex-EPDM leader, online interview, June 2014; and ex-EPDM fighter, interview, Addis Ababa, August 2014). The two organizations’ fighting power and experience in the field were vastly asymmetrical when the two agreed to form the EPRDF.

The TPLF could not afford to ignore the Oromo and the Southern ethnic groups, either, given their huge population as well as history of resistance against Amhara rule. To this end, a coalition with the OLF was considered but dropped for many reasons, one of which was the fact that that group was found to be too independent and even critical of the TPLF (see Vaughan 1994, 17-19; 2003, 178-182; ex-OLF fighter, interview, Addis Ababa, September, 2014), something the latter found unacceptable. The TPLF had therefore to look for other alternatives. The other two organizations that currently make up the ruling party were non-existent before the EPRDF was formed. They were pure handiworks of the TPLF—assisted by the EPDM and EPLF (Gudina 2011, 667). With an intention to help it control Oromolands and Southern Ethiopia, the TPLF assembled former prisoners of war and some educated elements without much political experience and established the OPDO and the SEPDF. They both have remained subservient to and effectively under the control of the TPLF. Thus, the elites in these organizations, EPDM/ANDM included, do realize the legitimacy crisis they suffer from in their own alleged constituencies (Mengisteab 2007, 82), a situation that pushes them further towards the TPLF for political sustenance, and presents the latter with further opportunity to exercise

considerable leverage over their activities.

The TPLF controls the different members of the EPRDF and other ruling parties of the underdeveloped regions through different formal and informal mechanisms. Most importantly, the TPLF has for most of its time in power been officially in charge of the major and critical sectors in the political system, such as the military, intelligence, foreign relations, the economy, and, until recently, the prime ministerial portfolio. According to many reports (see der Beken 2012), it has also had a firm control over the other sectors/ministries indirectly through its powerful members who officially served positions just below the ministerial level (as ministers d'état, for instance). Furthermore, the regional governments, as we will see again below, have been safely under its control through its “advisors” and military personnel on the ground, as well as its prerogative to unseat recalcitrant officials from power and control the financial resources of regional parties. Moreover, decision-making on major issues of the state affairs are made by its “party leaders behind closed doors.” As Vestal (1999, 125–26) puts it, “not a single important political or organizational question is decided by government officials or mass organizations without guiding direction from the party. The Front [TPLF] stands above all, and the leaders do not test their policies in a forum of free speech and fair elections. Instead they mobilize and enforce consent.” The governing principle of such decision-making is democratic centralism, which the TPLF practices consistently and extensively along party and state structures. In light of this principle, top-level decisions “are transmitted to party officials and state administrators and must be adhered to” (ICG 2009, 16).

The hegemony of the TPLF over other non-TPLF members of the EPRDF is facilitated, as I mentioned above, by the fact that they, lacking any popular legitimacy of their own, derive their *raison d'être* from their subservience to the TPLF. These members “built their careers largely

on the personal links with the TPLF . . . mentors rather than having their own political base”³⁵ (ICG 2009, 16). The Ethiopian federal state is beyond doubt “Tigrayan-dominated,” writes Lovise Aalen (2002, 46) and “Tigrayan interest is pursued and the Tigray regional state maintains an exceptional position in the federation while the governments of other federal units remain weak and practically ineffective.” Hence, it is too farfetched to associate the EPRDF in practice with any character that has anything to do with a consociational party.

A better candidate for resembling the consociationalists’ “grand coalition” in Ethiopia could be the inter-party coalition that the TGE represented during early 1990s. In addition to the EPRDF, the TGE also included some independent political parties, most notably the OLF, which had 12 seats in the 87-strong Council of Representatives and four ministerial portfolios. However, the distribution of power among these forces was so skewed in favor of the TPLF/EPDF that the overbearing actions of the latter barely allowed the “coalition” to stay for more than a year (see Lyons 1996, 126-129; de Waal 1992, 722; Parmelee 1992; Tuso 1997, 358-363; Vestal 1999, part 1). Some of the unarmed parties were expelled from the transitional government on the pretext that they worked towards undermining the legitimacy of the TGE, an opinion they vehemently deny (ex-SEPDC official, interview, Addis Ababa, October 2014). The OLF, still armed, fielded many complaints about the harassment and abuse of its members and supporters, as well as the unfair implementation of the encampment agreement, and left the coalition. Hence, arguably since 1993 but categorically from 1995 (the end of the transition period) onwards, the TPLF, for all intents and purposes, has been the sole state agent profoundly shaping the destiny

³⁵Patronage networks between regional rulers and some elements within the society are however present with varying degrees and define an important aspect of local politics in EPRDF’s Ethiopia. See below for more on this.

of the country as a whole.

The other aspect of consociational power sharing that the ruling party tinkered with is proportional representation. In this respect as well, post-1991 Ethiopian reality is at odds with the rhetoric of ethnic empowerment that representation is supposed to achieve in principle. Although the House of Federation is constituted by “nations, nationalities and peoples” that get seats in accordance with their size, the House has minimal roles in the decision-making process of the country’s vital agendas. The constitution vests on it the power to decide on matters related to the transfer of budgets, the interpretation of the constitution, and the resolution of boundary disputes; however, experience shows that ultimate practical power in all these areas resides with the executive branch of the government. More generally, the House of Federation “does not enable” states/groups to “have a say” in legislation even to the extent that “the ceremonial House of Lord” in the UK does³⁶ (Bihonegn 2015, 404). “The roles the House has in protecting the interests of member states in decisions of the federal government are insignificant.” (Ibid.). The members of the House are also usually appointed by the regional council of the kilil (as this is constitutionally sound) without any say of the people residing in those kilils. Moreover, it is the party to which the members of the executive belong (i.e., EPRDF) that vastly dominates the more important house in terms of policy-making, that is, the House of People’s Representatives. Filled with MPs who are brought up by virtue of highly controversial elections (see below), the representativeness of the members of the House of People’s Representatives in general, and of the minority ethnic groups in particular, is questionable.

³⁶ As Bihonegn (Ibid.) puts it, “The House of Lord is able to delay bills by the House of Commons for at least three months.”

“Federalism” and Status of Ethnic and Democratic Rights

I will now turn to the internationally and locally most publicized aspect of EPRDF’s rule, and considered by it as symbolizing the party’s most radical re-structuring of the country’s mode of rule, the federal arrangement (or Lijphart’s “segmental autonomy”). As I will show below, deeper investigation of the practical side of the EPRDF’s federal arrangement would lead to a conclusion drastically different from the façade of the principle of federalism as enshrined in the Ethiopian constitution.

Contrary to the constitution that grants magnanimous rights to the “nations, nationalities and peoples” of Ethiopia, the shadow of the federal government (controlled ultimately by the TPLF) is prevalent in every corner of the country and at every level of the state structure (Kefale 2013, 145-147; Aalen 2002, 85-88; Vaughan and Tronvol 2003, 134; Fisseha, 2006). The TPLF/EPRDF appoints “advisors” to the “underdeveloped” kilils who, practically speaking, act as the ultimate decision-makers on behalf of the regional council. The ruling party also dispatches federal troops with the pretext of keeping order and stability in some kilils, thus eliminating any opposition activity in those regions. Policies at the regional level, moreover, usually descend from the EPRDF executive committees, which regional council members are expected to conform to *ipso facto*. The party, in addition, removes politically insubordinate kilil officials from power through the mechanism of *gim gema* (evaluation) and puts in place pliant ones.³⁷ It has forced out a kilil ruling party from power and replaced it with one of its choice, and

³⁷Meles, the later prime minister of Ethiopia and the leader of the EPRDF, did not mince words about this. He once said, “In Southern Ethiopia and in Oromia, in particular, we have been forced to build and then destroy our organizational work. We recruit large numbers of people in government work. We find them to be like flies on honey. We toss them away. Again, we recruit and toss. This condition is still ongoing.

has also made the kilils excessively financially dependent on the center (some regions covering only 10% of their public expenditures on their own), hence effectively controlling not only their political activity but also economic planning and implementation. But above all, it minted kilil parties that are destined to rule their kilils as long as they show willful submission to the elites at the center, and thus with questionable legitimacy from below. “Across the country, “states an ICG (2009, 17) report, “and at all administrative levels representatives are designated by top-down nominations and then submitted to popular ‘confirmation’ in the absence of a formal vote or in non-competitive elections.”

Some of these federal interventions involve the use of massive force and gross violation of not only the federal principle of regional autonomy but also the human rights of the people inhabiting those kilils, as we will see below. One spectacular instance befitting to mention here is the forced termination of the Ogaden National Liberation Front’s (ONLF) rule in 1994 in the Ogaden region due to disagreements over the ONLF’s penchant for secession. The EPRDF’s subsequent massive crackdown on the ONLF and its supporters quickly transferred to any ordinary Somali with questionable loyalty to the government. The blatant successive military interventions by the government allegedly to keep law and order in the region and the resulting colossal scale of abuse of human rights are now well-documented, and it is quite obvious that they have generated a deep sense of grievance among many Somalis (Hagman 2013a; 2013b; 2013c; Human Rights Watch 2008; ICG 2013).

We have an urgent business of tossing away in Southern Ethiopia in the not too distant future” (Milkias 2003, 11).

In short, the Ethiopian federal arrangement “operated very much like a centralized unitary state with most power residing at the political centre” (Keller and Smith 2005, 267). Markakis (2011, 281–82) agrees that “the elite in the centre continue to rule; the elite in the periphery continue to administer. Federalism does not entail equitable sharing of power and did not end the historical hegemony of the center. This remains the structural fault that continues to destabilize the nation state-building project.” Not unlike the previous regimes in Ethiopia, “the EPRDF has maintained control over the regional governments, and the satellite parties have become vehicles by which the EPRDF exercises indirect rule over the whole country” (Mengisteab 2001, 23). The “promise of regional autonomy and simultaneous exercise of central control . . . reduces the support for the federal government because people feel betrayed” (Frank 2009, 9). In fact, “the gap between rhetoric and possible implementation *is likely to cause frustration among the people*” (Ibid., 8. Emphasis added).

Perhaps one significant change—primarily a result of the federal-like system put in place--wrought about to the Ethiopian state under the current ruling party is the expansion of local politics. Clapham (2017, 79) has recently argued that the most striking change in the otherwise historically centralized mode of governance known in the country is that “government offices are staffed by individuals indigenous to the area involved...”. This means that they are “associated with elements or factions within those societies that in turn open up linkages between rulers and ruled that had been suppressed or non-existent”. These linkages allow for the proliferation of patronage networks that help initiate a political process through which “support on the ground could be translated into an official position of influence in regional...and national politics”. Thus, the presence of local politics—however controlled and managed centrally—puts the

EPRDF style of governance apart from the previous eras where a fully imposed system of governance was prevalent across the country.

This argument has some merits but should not be overemphasized. Regional political process is visible more extensively now than under the previous regimes. However, its scope differs from region to region. Local politicians from some of the smaller ethnic groups³⁸ have had more luck in establishing significant linkages on the ground while those from the more populous and restive ones have had difficult times doing so. Both due to its internal diversity and “the underlying weakness of support for the government”, as Clapham (p. 80) himself acknowledges, Oromiya has been harder for EPRDF elites to “recruit local leaders who can combine some standing in regional politics with the necessary level of acquiescence in central policy”. Gaining support here requires advocating some level of Oromo autonomy that the EPRDF finds threatening. In the Amhara region, in contrast, advocating a form of Ethiopianism is necessary for gaining popular credibility but that ideology is no less menacing to the ruling party that construes it as the ideological embodiment of its past enemy, the Dergue. Therefore, at least in the two most populous regions of the country, the scope of local politics is very restricted in that it has not given regional leaders a significant base to stand upon nor has it opened avenues of any meaningful popular representation even at the regional level.

In light of the abuse of some core principles of power-sharing and federalism in the hands of the current ruling party, even the implication of the actual progress made in terms of the protection of language rights—perhaps the most important achievement of the EPRDF’s federal system—to

³⁸Especially those in the Regional State of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia where local politics is relatively more vibrant.

dampening anti-regime sentiments is not quite clear. It is indeed plausible to argue that the freedom granted, both constitutionally and practically, to use local languages in the areas of public administration and education in the regions and zones of Ethiopia is a break from the past. Studies also show that the exercise of language rights has generated some satisfaction among many of the beneficiaries of these rights (Smith 2008, 228; Cohen 2000, 122). However, it is questionable to assume that the exercise of these rights would diminish grievance towards the regime, especially among those ethnic groups with a long history of political activism. For instance, some of the most populous ethnic groups and those that brought forth active insurgency in the past do not necessarily credit the EPRDF for being the reason behind the better protection of language rights in today's Ethiopia. The whole idea of securing the right for self-determination and especially the use *afaan Oromo* (language of the Oromo) for self-administration and education, for example, is attributed by an enormous number of the Oromo people, the single largest ethnic group in the country, to the OLF and its long struggle for the cause of that ethnic group (ICG 2009, 27). This association of the protection of language rights with the OLF (rather than the TPLF) is based on solid facts on the ground. It was the OLF, during its sharing of state power in the early 1990s, that "began a literacy programme throughout Oromia using the Latin script" (Bulcha 1997, 349), in contrast to the Amharic *fidel* script that was in use to inscribe all languages in Ethiopia before 1991. In fact, it was the critical role played by the OLF member Ibsa Gutama who was an education minister during the TGE that finally led to the adoption of local languages for the purpose of formal education (Guutama 2003). Asafa Jalata (2005, 210) notes the efforts made by the OLF when it was part of the government in early 1990s towards implementing the idea of self-determination for the Oromo:

[T]he OLF worked toward several objectives: to enable Oromia to achieve the right of national self-administration under its national assembly; to bring Oromian national resources under the control of the Oromo; to decentralize state power according to ethnations so that power cannot be concentrated under a central government; to guarantee Oromia the right to develop its culture, language, and education; and to guarantee Oromia the right to build its own army to defend its national interest.

Hence, any benefit accrued by one of the most important—politically and demographically—ethnic groups in the country, the Oromo, from the current arrangement does not necessarily reduce grievance towards the EPRDF; in fact, the benefits may actually increase admiration, especially among the educated circles, for the ruling party’s adversary, that is, the OLF, which is usually associated with laying the foundations for those benefits³⁹ and for whom “many ordinary Oromos retain an almost messianic belief as [their] major nationalist organisation” (ICG 2009, 27). It is thus not plausible to assume the exercise of language rights would necessarily reduce grievance towards the TPLF regime in any meaningful manner, especially among some important ethnic groups in the country.

Moreover, it is difficult to argue that the principle of language rights itself has been practiced in all parts of the country to the full satisfaction of the different ethnic groups of Ethiopia. There still are some lingering problems. For instance, in some regional states—such as the SNNPR, the Gambella, and the Benishangul—the working language of the region is still Amharic, and the Afar Region used that same language as its official language until only few years ago. The

³⁹This is of course in addition to the prevalence of other diverse sources of grievance among the ethnic groups, such as the Oromo against the regime, which increases their hatred towards its rule and invokes longing for alternatives. Both the re-centralization of state rule and the massive scale human rights abuse in the regions targeting (suspected) activists opposing the regime are among the most prominent of these sources, as we have seen and will see below.

reasons suggested for this refer to the multi-ethnic composition of these regions (SNNPR, Gambella, and Benishangul) or the presence of “significant number of outsiders” in the regional work force (Afar) (kilil official, interview, Semera, December 2014). Although local languages are used for the provision of public services and education (somewhat limited) at the zone/woreda level (Cohen 2006), the very fact of Amharic serving as the working language of these non-Amhara regions brings to memory the traces of the old cultural hegemonic imposition. Particularly in Afar, the justification given does not convince a vast majority of the people of the region, whose “ownership” the constitution grants exclusively to the Afaris.

Furthermore, the EPRDF has at times directly forced some ethnic groups to eschew their languages in favor of another. A notable example is the case of Wagagoda, an “Esperanto-style” language created in late 1990s by government-sponsored linguists out of four distinct languages in the southern region of Ethiopia, Wolayta, Gamo, Gofa, and Dawro (Smith 2013, 91). The move to establish the language as a medium of instruction in schools instigated wide-spread and intense rebellious reactions on the part of the Wolayta, many of whom took to the streets in the Soddo town in 1999 to air opposition to the policy. Government forces reacted with violence, killing ten, injuring hundreds, and arresting around a 1000. In addition, many teachers and civil servants lost their jobs or were sent to other places to teach (Ibid.). Although the policy was later found unfeasible and was revoked, the violence with which the opponents to it were silenced created a deep scar in the minds of many Wolayta, a people known for harboring a strong sense of pride about their perceived collective identity for long (see Smith 2013, 92).

Finally, it is befitting to remember that the practice of language rights at present, although different from the past, is not necessarily radical in the sense of being totally unheard of in the country’s history. The embattled Dergue did open up the system to a limited extent when it

comes to ethnic pluralism with a specific reference to language rights. As Zahorick and Teshome (2009, 87) explain, the Dergue tried to promote “an atmosphere of plurality within the state including language policy.” In particular,

the second half of the 1970s brought a flourishing development of linguistic pluralism as compared to the previous era. In 1975, the first Oromo magazine—Bariisaa—was published and a year later the Communist Manifesto (Maanifestoo Paartii Kommonistii) was translated in Oromo. Radios started broadcasting in five languages—Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Tigrinya and Wolayta. Financially supported by UNESCO, the government launched an alphabetization campaign that included besides the already mentioned big languages also Hadiya, Kambaata, Gurage, Gedeo, KefaMocha, Saho, Afar, Tigré and Kunama. (Ibid.)

In the final analysis, however, as much as it tried to pluralize the linguistic landscape of the country, the Dergue’s integrationist policy took the upper hand, as I stated earlier. As Cohen notes, “[T]he only language that took advantage of the campaign was Amharic since all major publications were written in it and it thus further spread its influence over the country” (Ibid.). The current government has not shattered the foundations of this specific source of grievance.

Putting Amharic at an advantage against the other languages in the country is an accusation that the EPRDF shares with the previous regime. With some changes of varying levels—some cosmetic, others significant depending on the region of the country considered—the post-1991 regime kept Amharic, and only Amharic, as the federal working language and thus as the most advantaged one, much to the chagrin of many non-Amharas who see in this policy the continuation of the culturally oppressive past and who believe their language deserved to get that

status (as well).⁴⁰ “The selection of Amharic,” according to Midega (2014, 5) “was the continuity of the unfair monolingual policies of previous regimes of Ethiopia.” For example, many Oromo elites, believing that their language has the most mother-tongue speakers in the country (33.8% in 2007, as compared to 29.3% for Amharic speakers), have argued that afaan Oromo should have at least been the other working language of the federal government of Ethiopia (See, e.g., Midega 2014; Abebe 2015).

This decision to offer special advantage to Amharic instead of other languages has had practical implications for political participation at the federal level, the locus of state power in a country with an extremely centralized state structure. As Midega (2014, 19) argues in relation to the Oromo language, “disqualification of the largest language from the status of federal official language could exactly amount to systematic exclusion of the group who speak the language,” proving the fact that language choices determine “patterns of participation in power, wealth and prestige.” Among the ethnic groups that have been disadvantaged (proportional to their size) in terms of representation at the federal level—the centre of political power—are the Oromo, the

⁴⁰The argument in this section that grievance is still wide-spread in the country due to problems associated with the protection of ethnic rights is not based on a theoretical assumption that in order for grievance to be significantly reduced, all group rights should be perfectly—constitutionally and practically—protected by the state. In fact, there are several cases in the world where slight changes in the integrationist policies of states could dampen popular grievance. My arguments here are very specific to the case I am analyzing: the Ethiopian political landscape. While teasing out factors that generate or dampen grievance in Ethiopia, or any other given country for that matter, it is imperative to understand state policies in light of the historical developments of the country and the possible expectations and perception of its population towards those policies at any given point in time. The point I am making is that given the criticality of and the huge value attached to ethnic rights (“the national question”) in Ethiopia’s recent past; the deep-seated and wide-spread grievances that the way past regimes dealt with the national question resulted in; the failure of the current regime to make a significant break from the past state policies and politics; and finally the apparently significant gap between the high expectations of diverse Ethiopians about how identity issues are supposed to be handled by the state and the bleak reality on the ground—it is not difficult to assume the persistence of wide-spread grievance in the country under the current regime too. This argument also means that rather than trying to set up a formulaic benchmark to decide whether certain integrationist policies of states would engender grievance or not, I prefer to see specific cases holistically—historically, politically and psychologically—in my effort to observe or expect the existence of popular grievances.

Somali, and the Sidama ethnic groups. Although they constitute about 34.5%, 6.2%, and 4.0% of the Ethiopian population, respectively, they made up only 17.75%, 0.09%, and 0.39%, respectively, of federal government employees. The Amhara ethnic group, on the other hand, “constituting 26.9% of the total population gets employed nearly twice its percentage (50.15%)” (Ibid., 9). The major factor responsible for this imbalance is federal language policy: “The designation of Amharic as the sole official language of the federal government has resulted in the continuation of age-old marginalization of non-Amharic speakers in general and Oromo in particular in the state bureaucracy” (Ibid., 10).

All in all, the EPRDF’s approach to the national question has shared much with the centralization and integrationist policies of past regimes. Although there have been many changes at the level of rhetoric and some even in practice, the practical mode of managing ethnic division has not come close to resolving the “national question” in Ethiopia. This has happened at a time when expectations have never been higher. The year 1991 brought with it the high hope of the different ethnic groups in the country, especially those who suffered in the past that, with the downfall of the integrationist military junta, age-old grievances would be resolved once and for all. The independence of Eritrea, the promulgation of a TGE comprising independent ethnic parties, and the ratification of a charter that defines Ethiopia on the basis of its ethnic constituent units added reasons for higher hopes. The power-sharing experiments, however, turned out to be very short-lived, and a very different system was put in place and has endured since. It is reasonable to expect that especially those ethnic groups in the periphery with historic national grievances towards the center (i.e., the Oromo, Somali, Afar, Sidama and Wolayta) will not happily settle for what they see as more or less another round of integrationist state policies. The belief of Asafa Jalata (for eg., 2005, 190, 201, 208), Mohammed Hassen and Seyoum Hamesso (2006,

chapter 1), and a host other engaged scholars that TPLF-rule is nothing but a continuation of the age-old Abyssinian colonial subjugation of the people of the south and the east, with only the immaterial replacement of the Amhara by the Tigrayan ruling class, is, although a bit exaggerated⁴¹, no doubt shared by a great many people from these areas (some might doubt the “colonial” characterization of the Ethiopian rule.). That this is so after a protracted struggle for liberation and after a change of regime is predictably a source of pervasive frustration in the country (See Sarbo 2009, 233).

However, perhaps the most deep-seated popular grievances come not from the abuse of the collective rights of ethnic groups, but from the violation of human rights of different sections of the population under the EPRDF. The 1991 coming to power of the EPRDF seemed to herald a new phase in the political direction of the country. An inclusive government was formed and a liberal charter was designed and ratified for the whole nation. Plenty of promises were made about democratic transition in the country and some democratic institutions (such as elections and a parliamentary system) were established to that effect. In practice, however, as all independent observers agree, present-day Ethiopia is a full-blown authoritarian state (Aalen and Tronvol 2009; Abbink 2006; Smith, 2007, 6; Tronvol 2010). Election after election proved to be textbook cases of “voting without choosing” or pure instances of electoral authoritarianism (See

⁴¹ It should be clear to the reader that this dissertation does not deny the changes made to the Ethiopian state with the coming to power of the EPRDF/TPLF (for instance, capacity to register faster economic growth, establishment of the technical structures of a federal system, installation of different modes of control over regions, selective and restricted opening up of channels for the practice of local politics, and others). It is thus wrong, objectively speaking, to assume that the only difference between the military and the current regimes is that of the identity of the state agent. The argument advanced in this research rather is that as far as those factors that have direct or indirect relationship with insurgency are concerned, the extent to which the state has been transformed should not be exaggerated.

Gudina 2011). Independent press and civil society organizations have been strongly and closely regulated, and frequently harassed.

Massive and gross instances of human rights abuse have also been recorded throughout the EPRDF's rule (See Pausewang and Schroeder 2009). Ethno-nationalist activists—some of whom had high hopes of empowerment from the government and who naturally form the bedrock of its ethnic politics—from every major ethnic group have borne the brunt of the regime's abuse of human rights. As I will show in chapter five, thousands of Oromo activists have been targeted—some killed, others arrested or “disappeared”—by the regime after its falling out with the OLF in the early 1990s.⁴²The Oromiya Support Group alone documented 857 forced disappearances and 3,085 extrajudicial killings of Oromos by 2002 (Sarbo 2009, 221). According to Sarbo (2009, 220), “tens of thousands [have been], killed, disappeared, tortured, and imprisoned.” Any independent Oromo press was outlawed and journalists were either apprehended or forced into exile. The crackdown on Oromo activists continued with variable intensity until it reached its early 1990s level with the eruption in 2016 of another round of massive scale non-violent opposition across Oromiya, protesting the federal government's intention to incorporate parts of Oromiya into Addis Ababa. At the time of writing, different zones of the region are undergoing colossal unrest and the federal forces are meting out highly repressive measures against protesters. Several hundred people have been killed so far (HRW 2016). All the repressions

⁴²It is important to mention in this respect that the termination of the coalition with the OLF had in the first place left a deep scar in the minds of the Oromo people that once hoped Oromo power was near. The TPLF's-orchestrated forceful removal from power of the OLF and replacement of TPLF-organized OPDO elites in power to rule Oromiya, as it was perceived (by the vast majority of the Oromo), has also been a significant source of dissatisfaction among the Oromo (See successive Human Rights Watch reports: 1999; 2005; 2012, for instance).

meted out against the Oromo for over two decades have consistently amplified “*real and perceived grievances*,” and as a result, “Oromo nationalism is increasing” (ICG 2009, 27. Emphasis added). Similarly, thousands of Somalis, as seen above, have fallen victim to rape, torture, and murder by both the federal government forces and the Leyou Police, highly feared special regional militia directly accountable to the regional president, who is in turn closely tied to high profile intelligence and military officers in the federal government. The attack against the Somalis intensified after the forceful removal of the ONLF, the regional ruling party, in 1994 by the EPRDF. In 2002, Sidama activists staged a huge demonstration protesting their loss of a regional status in the federal system. They were met with live ammunition that killed several protesters. The incident, known as the Loqee Massacre, has been commemorated ever since by the wider Sidama diasporic community. A Human Rights Report of March, 2005 observes that in the Gambella region, “the Ethiopian military has committed widespread murder, rape and torture against the Anuak population since 2003.” Around 400 Anuak civilians have been killed by soldiers and a mob apparently allied with the regime. The military also caused the destruction of over 1000 homes (Ibid.). It is difficult to exhaustively list the records of human right abuses in EPRDF’s Ethiopia.

The fact that these setbacks to human rights took place in an era of perceived democratic upsurge is worth considering. As Murhula (2012, 2) puts it,

The global emergence of liberal democracy after the Cold War had an appeal to all nations, especially in the developing world, since every single citizen could claim equal right or, at least, felt entitled to it. On the political plane, it symbolized the best alternative possible to the totalitarian regimes that characterized most of the twentieth century, be it Nazism, Fascism, and Communism or Africa's postcolonial autocracies. On

the socioeconomic plane, it was viewed almost as a panacea to corruption, inequalities, and social injustices that plagued the continent since its accession to independence.

Hence, electoral processes came to represent the best way to punish bad political leaders and to replace them by more promising ones.

With such a high and widespread belief in and expectation for democracy, the actual failure of the transition to democracy in some of these nations has caused deep and rampant frustration, especially among the youth of these countries (Ibrahim 2015). The new generation of Ethiopia could not be outside this general trend of sharp contradiction between high democratic expectation and authoritarian realities in their country. Having been doubly socialized into the discourse of democracy—first through the global wave of democratization and the democratic discourse and second through the government’s own consistent rhetorical support for it—without witnessing it in practice in its acceptable form, the population’s resulting sense of intense grievance is not difficult to imagine. Hagmann and Abbink’s (2013,12) assessment in this respect is telling:

In Ethiopia, “democracy” and “democratization” have become promises of an almost spiritual nature that are constantly renewed, but never really fulfilled, as EPRDF has shown no willingness to share power with other constituencies ever since it came to power. It is of little surprise then that the steady hollowing out of “democracy” by the government has left many Ethiopians, both the urban and educated middle class as well as the rural people, deeply disillusioned.

ICG (2009, 29) concurs: “[The ruling party] has established a party-state system that perpetuates its rule but frustrates large parts of the population. Its obsession with controlling political

processes from the federal to the local level reflects the former liberation fighters' paranoia and incites opposition groups to consider armed struggle their only remaining option.”

While the EPRDF's quarter-of-a-century-old reign has, thus, failed to fulfill the desires of the historically marginalized peoples⁴³, it has also further alienated members of the previously politically dominant ethnic group. This is where the ironic effects of the federal project in particular and its ethnic-based politics in general reach their height. The Amhara ethnic group had always been a relentless stronghold for anti-EPRDF resistance before the TPLF came to power, and continued to be so afterwards. As the historical stronghold of right-wing Ethiopian nationalism, the Amhara ethnic group constantly brought up forces known for their fervent hostility towards the ethnic politics of the TPLF. Fearful of the possible negative consequences of TPLF's rule, Ethiopian nationalists began to orchestrate large-scale political activism at the time of the downfall of the military rule. With the fast ascendance of ethnic-friendly discourse by the victors, the Amhara nationalists began reviving the mythical image of a once “glorious” motherland that had reached what they saw as a critical juncture.⁴⁴ The de facto independence of

⁴³ However much the post-1991 agents of the Ethiopian state wished to be credited with opening up the political space of the country, the fact that the most powerful ones among them come from a minority ethnic group (Tigre) makes autocratic repression a necessity, given the uncompromising need for political survival. Free and fair democratic elections and protection of civil rights, for instance, would not be expected to be in their political interest. In terms of popular perception, on the other hand, because the EPRDF is essentially a minority regime, every incident of repression by it has a heightened ethnic meaning attached to it from below, as can be gleaned from the analysis so far.

⁴⁴ It is interesting to note the similarities and differences between the policies of the EPRDF and that of the Amhara nationalists. At the level of rhetoric, for example, on the one hand, the EPRDF advocates some accommodationist policies (for e.g., support for ethnic federation), while the latter vehemently opposes them. On the other hand, they both advocate the continuity of a strong unified state, a point that places both of them apart from the secessionist ethnic nationalists, such as elements within the OLF and the ONLF. At the level of practice, the Amhara nationalists greatly oppose even the cosmetic accommodationist changes wrought upon the Ethiopian state by the EPRDF, such as the federal-like arrangement in the country. They believe that ethnic federalism, especially when put in place and maintained by an authoritarian regime, is liable to implode and destroy the country as it did to former Yugoslavia and the USSR. Hence, they advocate the renunciation—even rhetorical—of any ethnicized politics and the valorization of national unity. The paradox, thus, of ethnicist politics as it exists in current day Ethiopia is that it is

Eritrea was a huge blow to this reviving nationalist cause. After the actual capture of power by the TPLF and the latter's hostility to the old Ethiopianist narrative became public, the Amhara started to organize and re-assert the nationalist narrative, mostly peacefully. It was, however, the putting in place of ethnic federalism that sent shockwaves through the ranks of Ethiopian nationalists, for they saw it as a prelude to the gradual but inevitable dismemberment of the Ethiopian state. Opposition to EPRDF's rule has been rampant in the Amhara and Amhara-dominated regions, manifested in the forms of registered legal opposition parties (for instance, the AAPO [later AEUO],⁴⁵ Semayawi Party, Andinet Party etc.), armed insurgencies (Ethiopian People Patriotic Front, Amhara Democratic Movement, G7 Popular), and public protests (organized and unorganized). The ethnicized (in particular the federal) project of the EPRDF, thus, created intense resentment among the Amhara, the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, without, as seen earlier, satisfying the other ethnic groups that blame the Amhara ruling class for their past misfortunes. Simply put:

For Amhara and national elites, ethnic federalism impedes a strong, unitary nation-state.

For ethno-national rebel groups like the ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front;

Somalis in the Ogaden) and OLF (Oromo Liberation Front; the Oromo), ethnic

decried both by the right-wing Amhara nationalists and their ethno-centric opponents. Both oppose it, but for different reasons: the former because they believe it could endanger the territorial integrity of the country; the latter because the way it is practiced is in no meaningful way different from the policies of the past integrationist regimes and is hence too oppressive. Finally, the current dispute between the Amhara nationalists and the EPRDF could also be seen as a pure power struggle deprived of any ideological/policy content. Both are unifiers and centralizers, but one is Amhara-based while the other is Tigray-based. That is very much the case when seen from the perspectives of non-Amhara, non-Tigre Ethiopians.

⁴⁵ All-Amhara People Organization and All-Ethiopian Unity Organization, respectively

federalism remains artificial. While the concept has failed to accommodate grievances, it has powerfully promoted ethnic self-awareness among all groups (ICG 2009, 29).

The Federal Arrangement and Communal Violence

Finally, if we recognized that the EPRDF's policies are not strongly associated with the reduction of violence by significantly diminishing level of grievance, then I need to briefly consider if there is another way those policies could contribute to that same outcome. Some Ethiopianist scholars refer to the indirect effects of the federal arrangement on conflict patterns in post-1991 Ethiopia. According to a host of them (Abbink 2006b, 390; Kefale 2013, 51), the Ethiopian federal system has created conditions for the re-production, intensification, and scaling up of inter-ethnic conflict, which in turn have been assumed to have a dampening effect on the onset of insurgency. The inter-ethnic conflicts take three forms: (1) conflicts between different ethnic groups within a regional state in a bid to control power in that region; (2) tribal conflicts over pastureland that had pre-dated the federal system but now have transformed into inter-ethnic and inter-regional conflicts since the former warring tribes have now got control over the regions within the federal system; and (3) conflicts between two ethnic groups involving territorial/border claims. Many of these conflicts have been violent, and their intensity has ranged from mere skirmishes to very deadly fights claiming thousands of lives. All of these conflicts could be attributed to many other factors, but the literature emphasizes their relation to the federal structure.

On the basis of these inter-ethnic conflicts, scholars (Abbink 2006b and Kefale 2013) have come up with an interesting hypothesis about insurgency in the country as a whole, arguing that the

federal arrangement has changed the dynamics of conflict in Ethiopia. By pitting different ethnic groups against one another,⁴⁶ the system has reduced the possibility of the proliferation of state-targeting insurgency, which was the prevalent mode of fighting in the recent past.⁴⁷ Hence, they tend to believe that the EPRDF has managed to “decentralize” conflicts by decentralizing administration (Abbink 2006b, 390; Kefale 2013, 51). This argument seems appealing at face value, but has some problems. It is apparently based on two assumptions, neither of which is strongly supported by recent historical facts in the country. The first assumption is that different ethnic groups were “fighting against the previous regime in unison” (interview with a scholar proponent of this view, Addis Ababa, Sept 2014), boosting their capacity to a whole new level. The second is that when ethnic groups are pitted against each other, they are not in a position to engage in high-scale warfare with the state. Post-1974 insurgency politics belies both of these claims. Insurgent groups, claiming to represent their respective ethnic or class groups fought multiple wars from the onset of the Ethiopian civil war until its end. In fact, it would be difficult to find an insurgency that took the Dergue as the sole enemy of its constituency and adhered strictly to that belief in practice.

⁴⁶ One can note that this line of argument resonates very well with the arguments, as seen in the theoretical chapter, of those scholars such as Collier et al. (2004), about the impacts of ethnic division/diversity on the durability of civil war. Some did suggest that ethnic division could weaken inter-ethnic alliance and collective action against the regime, making insurgency, for instance, quite a difficult enterprise. I believe this line of argument is not convincingly applicable to Ethiopia, as I will argue below.

⁴⁷ It should be noted that this assertion does *not* resonate with the well-known centripetalist conception of crafting stable federations. According to the proponents of this conception, policy makers should aim for establishing “national federations” by partitioning (especially large) ethnic groups into different federal units, and thereby weakening the ethnicization of politics locally. This will in turn lessen the force of state-targeting ethnic nationalism (see Choudhry 2008, introduction). Ethiopia’s federation is diametrically opposed to this centripetalist federal arrangement. Ethnic groups, even the largest ones, are in principle granted the status of being a federal unit and the right to administer themselves. Hence, centripetalist logic cannot be invoked to explain the reduction of insurgency in Ethiopia, and the authors mentioned here (Abbink and Kefale) do not base themselves on that logic when positing their arguments.

Other than with the Dergue, the TPLF had military conflicts (some of them very destructive to both sides) with not only the EPRP and Ethiopian Democratic Union—both claiming to represent all Ethiopians but largely seen by the TPLF as Amhara organizations—but also the Tigrayan Liberation Front. The OLF locked horns with the Somali-Abo Liberation Front (SALF) and Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF)—Oromo-Somali and Somali organizations, respectively—and had vicious battles with the Oromo-based Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO). The Eritrean People Liberation Front battled fiercely with the Eritrean Liberation Front before it appeared, after 1981, as the sole leader of the insurgency on Eritrean soil. Even the SALF and WSLF—coming from the eastern lowlands whose people share history, culture, religion, and the same sense of alienation, and also sponsored by the same Somali regime—could not mobilize the peoples of eastern Ethiopia to fight the Ethiopian (seen as an oppressive Christian Amhara) state in unison. According to my informants (former WSLF fighter, interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014 and former SALF senior member, interview, Addis Ababa Jan 2015), no serious efforts at coordination of military activities were made between the two organizations, and each fought its own battles with the Dergue (interview with ex-fighters and leaders, 2014). Each, moreover, far from being an umbrella organization for diverse tribes and ethnicities in the region, was overwhelmingly dominated by a single ethnic group (Oromo in the SALF, and Somali in the WSLF).⁴⁸Hence, rebel groups in effect not only had animosities toward the state and other insurgencies claiming to fight for other communities, they even fought with other rebel groups that hailed from their own ethnic communities.

⁴⁸ One of my informants, a former WSLF fighter (interviewed in Jijiga, Dec 2014), stated that some Hararis were present in the position of leadership in that organization. However, Hararis almost never took part in the army; the latter was dominated by ethnic Somalis.

Based on this evidence, we cannot plausibly argue that insurgency against the state has declined either in number or strength because of increase in incidence of inter-ethnic clashes under the current regime. As long as people are mobilized to fight the state under certain conditions (excluding the presence/absence of inter-ethnic conflict), it is not unusual to see them doing so in earnest, while at the same time also settling scores with their own co-ethnics who do not share their views or with other ethnic groups who are perceived as enemies. Hence, clashes between an ethnic group/insurgent versus another ethnic group/insurgent, on the one hand, and between an ethnic group/insurgent and the state, on the other, are not necessarily related. The existence of the one does not mean the existence or non-existence of the other.

3.1.2 Economic Indicators: Poverty and Income Inequality in Pre- and Post-1991 Ethiopia

Among the economic indicators the grievance and greed explanations proposed to explain collective violence, two have been given much attention in the literature: poverty (along with income inequality) and dependence on natural resources. As far as Ethiopia is concerned, the latter variable could be dismissed outright since the country is not a rich source of any of the “lootable” natural resources—oil, gold, diamond, coca, timber, or poppy—studied in the literature. None of the insurgencies during the Dergue’s period were in any way directly or significantly related to any of these natural resources. In fact, some of the most tenacious insurgencies (such as the TPLF) were based in some of the most barren and resource-poor regions of the country.

Level of poverty is one of the most important variables discussed in the literature. In fact, it is “one of the most established findings in the study of civil war” (Alexander and Harding 2006,

1).⁴⁹ Hence, it is necessary to give due attention to this variable. As I will try to show below, however, poverty, as well as income inequality, cannot conclusively explain the variable level of insurgency in Ethiopia. The pre-1991 period level of cross-regional economic development cannot account for the variance of insurgency during that time. On the other hand, the question of whether Ethiopia in the last 24 years has achieved a significant level of poverty reduction is too controversial to be useful in drawing any inference about the scale of insurgency in the country for that time period.

3.1.2.1 Reflections on Regional Poverty Levels in the Pre-1991 Era

Ethiopia in its entire modern history has been one of the poorest countries in the world. According to the World Bank, GNI per capita has oscillated between \$ 190 and 250 between 1984 and 1989, making the country one of the poorest overall. Within-country economic indicators do not correlate with the onset, intensity, or durability of insurgency. There is no evidence, for instance, that the two most rebellious regions of Tigray and Eritrea fared worse in economic terms than say Ogaden, Oromia, or Afar. Although “it is true that lack of state investment in Tigray limited development,” there “is little evidence that Tigray suffered disproportionately from other parts of non-Shoan Ethiopia in this respect” (Young 1997, 89). Indeed, it is a historical fact that Tigrayans never “suffered the loss of their land like many peoples of southern Ethiopia, nor were they ever made slaves like other unfortunate non-Abyssinian peoples” (Ibid.).

⁴⁹See the theoretical chapter for more sources and further discussions.

The economic condition of Eritrea before the war was one of the best in the country. By the time the Eritrean insurgency started, that region “accounted for a good third of the country’s industrial capacity”; foreign and local capital had helped “expand and modernize both industry and commercial agriculture” in the region, and it was a centre of export for consumer goods to Europe and the Middle East (Henze 1989, 8). Already during the Italian rule (1941–48), Eritrea had developed the necessary foundations (most importantly infrastructure) for a modernized economy. Although the benefits of such an advanced economy were substantially expropriated by the Ethiopian political establishment and although the Eritrean lowland was slightly more disadvantaged than the highland, Eritreans in general did not suffer economically more than their average Ethiopian counterparts, especially those in the south and southeast. By several counts, they enjoyed access to many social services second only to Ethiopians in the capital city (see Griffin 1992). All sources seem to converge on the “fact [that] Eritrea was better treated than any other province except Shoa” (Gilkes 1975, 196). The later intentional destruction of the Eritrean economic infrastructure and potential was a result of the growing insurgency in that region, whose intensification may be explained by the economic downturn (along with other variables), but not its initiation or its escalation.

The level of economic development did not match up with the onset or scale of insurgency in other regions either. The other hotbed of civil war, second only to Eritrea and Tigray in terms of intensity, was none other than the capital city (along with few other regional towns) of the country. Addis Ababa witnessed the most intense conflict in the 1970s at a time when it was the most economically favored of all regions of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa was the foremost center of all major economic activities both during the imperial and Dergue periods, and always enjoyed preferences in the provision of all public goods and services. In it were concentrated the highest

rates of industrial activity, student enrollment (at all levels), and health-care services in the entire country (see Keller 1988, 139-141).

Some Amhara regions also surpassed many others in terms of modernization. For instance, by 1972, the enrolment rates of students from central and northern Amhara lands—some of which turned out to be breeding grounds for rebel activities in the late 1970s—were larger than their population rates (Ibid.). Some parts of Shoa in particular, as the result of the region's geographic proximity to the centre and the alleged ancestral ties many in the nobility had with that region, received greater provision of public goods than many other regions in the country. And yet at least two insurgent groups commanded support in the region alternatively after the revolution (Omer 2002, 84-86).

The other hotspots of collective violence (e.g., Ogaden and parts of Oromoland) were relatively backward economically at the eve of the revolution (early 1970s) and remained so afterwards. The southeastern Oromo peasants, for example, lost their lands to northern settlers, were reduced to tenancy (the *naftagna-gabbar* system) and hence were subjected to severe exploitation and long-lasting destitution. It is true that the revolution dissolved the old *naftagna gabbar* system and gave the lands back to the peasants, but it subsequently tied the peasants once again to the equally exploitative and highly intrusive state (see Clapham 1989, chapters 5-7). The Oromo insurgency, however, was never on a par with its Tigrayan or Eritrean counterparts in terms of intensity. At the same time, it could be argued that the condition of the Oromo peasants was not worse than the other conquered peoples of the southern and western coasts of the country, where insurgency was at its weakest. These peoples were almost totally neglected in the developmental efforts of the central administration, unlike those under the *naftagna gabbar* system, where tenants had access—however minimal and limited—to modern public services established to

benefit northern settlers. Western regions (such as Gambella), for instance, remained one the most backward and poverty-ridden areas in the country (Tadesse 2011, 4), but hosted only nominal rebellious activities against the state. The most underdeveloped overall were certain regions within what is today known as Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples (Braukamper 2005, 365). Some of the ethnic groups inhabiting these areas had neither modern schools of any kind nor primary health-care posts on the eve of the Ethiopian revolution (Abbink 2002, 158). Throughout Ethiopia's modern history, the lowlands, in general, served no other purpose than as "hunting, raiding, and slaving grounds for the 'big men' [of the northern highlands]" (Tareke 1991, 35). These areas, however, brought forth almost no insurgencies of any kind with the 1974 regime change, and the few that did saw rebellions of varying scales that did not correspond with their level of economic backwardness. Indeed, the level of poverty/prosperity cannot help us predict the different degrees of insurgency that emerged in the various regions of Ethiopia immediately after the revolution.

3.1.2.2 Post-1991 Poverty Indicators

The Post-1991 Ethiopian economic condition is a bit more controversial and requires a more detailed discussion. I will thus consider whether Ethiopia has registered a significant rate of poverty reduction over the last 25 years that can explain the overall reduction of insurgency. There are two views on the question of poverty reduction under EPRDF's rule (see Mandefro 2016, 391).

One view, perhaps dominant among the international community, has it that Ethiopia, seeing rapid economic development especially since 2007, has shown a significant reduction in poverty in the last two decades. The proponents of this view, mostly government officials and supporters

of the ruling party, but also to some extent the international financial institutions, base their argument largely on the country's official statistical outputs. According to the four National Household Consumption Expenditure Surveys (HCES) that were conducted by the Central Statistical Agency (CSA) since 1996, the poverty head count has declined by 34.9% between 1995 and 2011. While acknowledging that this decline is significant, the same source notes the difference in the poverty gap and severity of poverty between urban and rural areas (poorer). The same proponents also argue that Ethiopia's double-digit and consistent growth since 2003 has stepped up the process of poverty reduction "by providing finance for pro-poor programs or through a growth pattern that disproportionally benefits the poor (i.e. pro-poor growth)" (Mandefro 2016, 392). According to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs article, the number of Ethiopians living under extreme poverty has been reduced by 9% within five years (Yifter 2013). These claims by the government, finally, have been endorsed—with some slight modifications—by the IMF, which claimed in 2013 (4) that "robust economic growth . . . has resulted in a several-fold rise in real per capita GDP and a dramatic drop in the national poverty rate (from 60.5 % in 2005 to 30.7 % in 2011)." The sources of data for the IMF's conclusion are subject to controversy, some scholars arguing that it is largely "based on the government's official data" (senior economist, phone interview, June 2014).

The second view, which is mainly propounded by the government's opponents, holds that poverty in Ethiopia, still widespread, has been reduced only marginally. The main evidence comes from the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), a new and comprehensive measurement of poverty developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme, and believed to be an improvement over aggregate-level measurements such as HDI and HPI (see OPHDI 2013). According to the MPI, the percentage of

poor people in Ethiopia in 2005, around when the controversial fast growth began, was 90, which improved only to 87.3% after five years. Both of these figures, moreover, were marginal improvements over the 93.6 % of 2000 (see Mandefro 2016, 394). The number of poor people, in this view, has always been very large, and improvements in poverty reduction, especially with the sharp increase in the country's population after 1991, have not been of much help to the vast number of Ethiopians.⁵⁰In fact, as Zahorik (2014, 1) concludes, despite the economic growth witnessed in the past decade, “millions of Ethiopians still live at a level of poverty more or less similar to that of the previous regime.”

Moreover, the government's national surveys, on which the figures of CSA are based, have been criticized along methodological lines (see Mandefro 2016, 394-395 for the discussions). First, it is argued that some regions in Ethiopia have been excluded from the study(ies). Second, the poverty line (0.60 USD set in 1996, and not revised since) has been set too low so as to bring many people out of poverty artificially. Third, the use of only one poverty line across the whole country “does not account for spatial cost of living differences”—which are found to be significant—and hence “gives incorrect poverty estimates” (Gebremedhin and Whelan 2007, 11). Fourthly, in contrast to the quantitative studies on which the government's figures are based on, some qualitative studies provide a very different picture of poverty in Ethiopia. For instance, Rahmato and Kidanu in a 1999 study (in Mandefro 2016, 395) state that “in the last ten years (i)

⁵⁰ GDP per capita, moreover, does not appear to have made much improvement over the previous era (although there are variations in the figures depending on the actual measurement one picks). Measured by GDP per capita constant 2005 US\$ and according to the World Bank, the average figure (calculated from the source) between the year 1981 and 1990 was approximately 147.03, while that between 1991 and 2011 was approx 158.8. (The slight increase of the latter figure is usually attributed to the post-2007's relatively faster—albeit much debated—growth rate in the country. For the same reason, certain other indicators show some increase in the GDP per capita after 2008, but for most of EPRDF's period, the average per capita income remained similar to that of the Dergue period.

a lot of households have moved from the middle to the lowest category and (ii) a new category of the weak and disabled has been added [to the poor category].” Finally—and this being perhaps the strongest challenge to the official statistics—is the discrepancy between the conditions of objective and subjective (i.e., perceived) poverty in Ethiopia. Alem et al. (2014, 51), in their study of subjective poverty in urban Ethiopia, argue, “Despite rapid economic growth and declining consumption poverty, subjective poverty remains largely unchanged.” Their survey-based research shows that “households with a history of past poverty continue to perceive themselves as poor even if their material consumption improves,” suggesting that “economic growth was not followed by improvement in the self-perceived welfare of the poor” (Ibid., 52). This, among other things, is due to the fact that the double digit growth in the country since 2004 was “accompanied by double digit inflation rate . . . which appeared to have had adverse impacts on the welfare of citizens” (Ibid.).

Generally speaking, EPRDF’s Ethiopia has registered considerable economic growth for over a decade⁵¹. This demonstrates the stronger capacity of the EPRDF-led state to manage a massive scale development agenda compared not only to its predecessor but also to many post-colonial African countries. It is, however, very doubtful if that growth has had any meaningful positive political implications for the government. If at all we agree that the state has been successful in “promoting general welfare as well as crude indicators of economic growth”, it has failed to “convert this success into political support” (Clapham 2017, 101):

Rapid economic change necessarily creates its own social imbalances, as different groups...benefit (or lose out) to a very different extent, exacerbating the awareness of

⁵¹The actual rate of growth being very debatable, however, as indicated elsewhere.

differences, and intensifying the politics of resentment... [Such an economic change] brings with it disruption that can serve as a source of opposition, and the disproportionate concentration of economic growth in the Oromia region, where the regime's political support has been most fragile, has not brought with it any corresponding political benefits and may well indeed have contributed to dissent⁵² (Clapham 2017,101-102, 108).

At this juncture, it is also important to examine how Ethiopia's poverty level rates internationally. The country, by all economic measures and according to all sources, is still one of the poorest in the world, as it was during the Dergue's period. For instance, in 1988, it had the lowest GDP per capita; and in 2013, after the much-acclaimed "double-digit" growth, its per capita (in constant 2005 US\$) was better than only four other countries in the world (World Bank). The MPI's poverty-based ranking is even lower: in all of its three rounds of reports, Ethiopia was found to be the second poorest country in the world (Mandefro 2016, 394). The question of poverty and poverty reduction in post-1991 Ethiopia, therefore, is at best clouded with controversy and hence cannot be used to reliably explain the reduction of political violence in the country since 1991.

3.1.2.3 Income Inequality in Post-1974 Ethiopia

Income inequality is not a good predictor of temporal difference in level of insurgency either. Income inequality (measured by the Gini Index) during the Dergue's period for the year 1982 (being the only year for which Gini index is available) is put by the World Bank at 32.42. The

⁵²An excellent example is the unprecedentedly massive scale social movement that has rocked the Oromiya region for the last couple of years since 2013. It began with the encroachment into Oromiya of the ever-expanding Addis Ababa city and the perceived growth of the latter at the expense of the poor Oromo farmers surrounding it.

average Gini Index for the four post-1991 years (1995, 2000, 2005, 2011) for which we have figures is 33.34 (calculated from the World Bank data), not considerably different from the past.

Interestingly, economic inequality at present, not unlike the past, has an ethnic dimension.

Evidence supporting the widely shared perception in Ethiopia (see below) that Tigrayans have benefited at the expense of others is not hard to find. The findings of Gudina (2007, 99) are worth quoting:

The available official data for the period 1993/94–1999/2000 clearly demonstrates the uneven distribution of national resources. For instance, the Oromo and the Southern Ethiopian Peoples' regions, which above all else are known for their production of coffee that constitutes more than 60% to the country's foreign exchange earnings, are allotted a clearly disproportionate share from the national treasury. According to the data of the period, the Tigray region's per capita share of the federal subsidy was consistently higher than the Oromia, Amhara and SNNP regions which, together, constitute more than 80% of the country's population. The same is true for capital expenditure per capita as well as foreign loan and aid per capita. Furthermore, the Somali region, whose population is greater than Tigray, was getting proportionally far less than Tigray until 1998 when it joined the favoured regions club, which makes the percentage of the disfavoured population more than 86% of the country's total population prior to 1998. In fact, the capital expenditure per capita for Tigray is about three times greater than that of Oromia. A more glaring discrepancy that can be inferred from the data of the period is the Oromia region, which is known for being the storehouse of Ethiopia's wealth, disproportionately receives the least from the national treasury.

Moreover, some studies illustrate disproportionate flow of the fruits of foreign aid to the home state of the ruling party. For instance, “analyses show that safety net benefits heavily benefit residents of Tigray . . . over other equally needy ethnic states such as Amhara and Oromiya” (Marchione and Ellen 2010, 19). Finally, the World Bank’s 2015 report clearly shows that the Ethiopian region that performed the best in terms of alleviating poverty from 1996 to 2011 was Tigray. Explaining the Bank’s finding, independent journalist Martin Plaut comments (2015), “not surprisingly, the TPLF under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and beyond concentrated their investment on their home region—Tigray. The results are plain to see.” Based on such evidence, the perception of Tigrayan favoritism at the expense of others under the current regime is widespread among the Ethiopian public. Academic sources have captured this phenomenon: according to Branch and Zakariah (2015, 155), for instance, “ethnic manipulation was combined with a widespread perception of Tigrayan favouritism by the EPRDF in particular in business and state and military.” Assertions such as the following are endorsed by many Ethiopians; they are found everywhere on social media and often come up in ordinary private discussions:

The resentment stems from the fact that Tigrayans are in power with full control of the economy, military, information, political and everything else in between. To deny that, is to deny reality. Ethiopia, since 1991, has been and is still being controlled by an ethnic minority clique from Tigray. The amount of monies, material wealth and the resources under the control of these Tigrayans is simply put, insane. They have gotten extremely rich simply by the sheer advantage of occupying the Menelik Palace provides. It accords them unchecked diplomatic prowess and political cover from any PR attacks around the world. In addition, control of the military gives them almost impenetrable power-base

from which to control the nation and its agendas regionally and internationally.
(Biedemariam 2010)

Praeg (2006, 139) also summarizes the view of the Ethiopian opposition:

[T]he opposition claimed that the TPLF, by using its dominant position in the EPRDF, had engineered favourable conditions in order to develop Tigray at the expense of the other National Regional States. Essentially, critics claimed that Federal budget allocations strongly benefited Tigray. To them, compared to the budgets for the Oromiya and Amhara National States, Tigray's allocations appeared unbalanced.... In fact, it was claimed that TPLF business enterprise had been dominating trade throughout the Federation.

Such perceptions—some of them exaggerated—fuel the sense of relative deprivation among many Ethiopians. The perceived ethnic discrimination at present in the hands of Tigrayan elites can be compared to the prevalent pre-1991 assumption that Amharas were the beneficiaries of the system, an assumption that was effectively used to mobilize tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of fighters against the state. Economic inequality, like poverty levels, then, can be seen as an important source of grievance during both regimes under consideration, and hence can best be taken as a control variable rather than as a factor that explains variation in the level of insurgency in the country.

3.2 State Repression

State repression is an important variable in the civil war literature but how exactly it affects collective action/violence is not clear. In connection to the Ethiopian case, some of the proposed

theories on the effects of repression do not hold true. The nature of insurgency during both the Dergue's period and at present showcases this discrepancy between the theories and the Ethiopian reality.

State repression cannot explain the variable levels in the durability and intensity of insurgencies during the Dergue's period. The northern insurgents—TPLF and EPLF—were the most formidable, and the most costly and long-lasting wars were also fought in and around their homelands. In contrast, the eastern parts of Ethiopia witnessed some fierce insurgent versus government violence in the late 1970s, but the scale of violence declined rapidly by the early 80s and stability was ensured. Moreover, even during its climax, the scale of violence in those areas was nowhere close to that in the north in the 1980s. The center went through a period of medium-level violence, but the urban insurgency was the most short-lived of all. Finally, some of the southeastern and western regions underwent lower-level intensity insurgency, but insurgent activities persisted until 1991. In short, insurgencies varied from high intensity, high durability; to high intensity, low durability; to low intensity, high durability. It is not convincing to link all these variations to level of state repression. For instance, two-thirds of the entire Ethiopian military force during the Dergue period was dispatched to the northern front (Tareke 2009, 46), the same area which witnessed the fiercest portions of the civil war and which brought up rebels that finally defeated the Dergue. Moreover, the southeastern/western insurgents faced off fewer troops and hence enjoyed relative durability precisely because they were too weak to be alarming to the state. Hence, state repression does not explain the modesty of their insurgency in the first place. Neither the “repression-escalates-insurgency” nor the “repression-reduces-insurgency” arguments help much to understand the variations noted above. There is, of course, some element of truth in the former argument in that the Dergue's indiscriminate killings led

many people to rebel, especially in Tigray and Eritrea; but there is more to the insurgents' durability and capability than this. More importantly, the very reason the regime made excessive use of its repressive arms, especially in these areas in contrast to others, was the prevalence of rebellions of significantly higher magnitude which needs to be explained by other factors.

Repression also fails to explain several aspects of insurgency in the EPRDF period. First, it cannot explain the variable success of the regime in exterminating rebel activities in different parts of the country. The EPRDF regime managed, in the early 1990s, to easily rout out its major adversary, the OLF, which was also the largest by far (in terms of fighting force) and the most experienced of all insurgent groups in post-1991 Ethiopia; at the same time, despite its best efforts, it was unable to extinguish the activities of its eastern enemy, the ONLF, but only managed to limit them for a long period. In other words, repression cannot explicate why some rebel groups had low intensity, low durability insurgencies, and others had low intensity, high durability insurgencies.⁵³ Moreover, state repression does not account for the incapacity of most of today's rebel groups to even initiate intense battlefield engagements with the regime. Most insurgents at present are based in neighboring Eritrea, a country that provides them with financing, weapons, training, media, and, of course, safe haven. The fact that despite all this support, almost none of the rebels have managed to initiate a strong challenge against government forces inside Ethiopia thus is not a result of the repressive actions of the Ethiopian regime. For one thing, the regime has no direct access to the rebels and their organizations to degrade their striking capacity. Hiding in Eritrea gives the rebels much-needed safety from

⁵³ On the other hand, repression in Somali region alone cannot explain the durability of ONLF's insurgency as Hagmann (2014, 47) argues. After all, the massive repression meted out against Oromos suspected of supporting the OLF especially in the early 1990s could not sustain the latter's insurgency. The vast difference of scale in the insurgencies of the two rebel groups is not largely a function of state repression.

Ethiopian strikes, but that safety has not so far contributed to the building up of strong rebel presence and activity inside Ethiopia. Furthermore, since there have been no intense confrontations between these rebel groups and the Ethiopian regime, the effect of state repression, if any, on rebel activity in current-day Ethiopia is unknown.

Finally, state repression might have made it difficult for current-day rebels to establish base areas inside Ethiopia, but this assertion should not be over-emphasized for two reasons. First, there is evidence that a few insurgent groups have been based inside Ethiopia at different times; the ONLF is the most important of these, having had a base located in the remote lands of the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia for some time (Hagmann 2014, 43). Second, and more importantly, establishing a base at the time of initiating an insurgency is not a condition for later escalation. As indicated in the cases of Dergue-era insurgencies (i.e., the WSLF and SALF), rebel groups that are created, trained, and equipped in neighboring countries can initiate wars against their target state and intensify the battle, and only later establish a strong presence inside the territories of their own country. Thus, arguments for possible negative effects of repression on rebel organizational formation inside a given country do not explain the incapacity of rebels to launch strong attacks against government targets, wherever they are *initially* located.

3.3 Termination of the Civil War as an Explanation of Reduced Insurgency

In the literature on the termination of civil war, two arguments have been put forward, as seen in the earlier chapter. On the one hand, a number of scholars have faith in negotiated peace agreements to bring about durable peace. On the other hand, other scholars have related durable peace to rebel victory. Interestingly both arguments are relevant to what happened in Ethiopia

during the post-Cold War regime change. But how important are they in explaining the reduction in violence?

In a sense, both—rebel victory and negotiated outcome—did take place in Ethiopia in the early 1990s—and with far-reaching consequences. The EPLF and TPLF defeated the Dergue regime and controlled state power in their own respective areas of operation. In this sense, what happened was rebel victory. But from another perspective, some important negotiations were taking place at the time. The TPLF was working with a host of other insurgent organizations—most notably the OLF nationally, and the ONLF and Afar Liberation Front (ALF) regionally—in a bid to make the transition smooth. The negotiations soon evolved into a coalition government that included the OLF. Even Eritrean independence could be seen as an outcome of negotiation since it was achieved with the TPLF's active facilitation of the referendum that led to independence. Eritrean independence was a rebel victory from the perspective of the EPLF's fight with the Dergue, but it was a negotiated outcome from the side of the TPLF, the new ruler of the country.

Be that as it may, how relevant are these processes to the reduction of violence in the post-1991 period? Neither the pro-rebel victory nor the pro-negotiated settlement arguments shed much light on the post-1992 political developments in Ethiopia. The former could be applicable only to the TPLF's/EPLF's fight with the Dergue regime, and hence provides no insight on the relationship between the TPLF and the other political organizations it dealt with after 1991. Rebel victory did bring about an end to the fight with the Dergue, but its effects on the post-Dergue relationship among the new contenders for power is not clear. The outcomes—whatever they were—of the negotiated settlement are applicable to the TPLF's negotiations with the OLF (and maybe the ONLF); but have little implication for the opposition organizations that emerged

after the TPLF's hegemony was ensured. Moreover, as we saw above and will examine in detail in another chapter, TPLF's negotiations and later consociational power-sharing with the existing Ethiopian insurgents of the time was short-lived, and hence the pro-negotiated settlement argument cannot explain the post-power-sharing condition in the country. In particular, it does not explain the incapacity of a dozen of rebel groups that sprang up in the country after 1998, or that of the older insurgents, such as the OLF, to seriously challenge the TPLF's rule. It could thus be argued that neither negotiation nor rebel victory alone can explain the post-1991 reduction in violence. Together, they provide some useful insights into the question, but they need to be supported by other factors—which are the topics of the next chapters.

3.4 War Fatigue

Finally, I will consider a factor that is relevant to post-conflict societies in general—as Ethiopia clearly was and still is. It could be plausible to argue, as some Ethiopian opposition party members do (interview with two opposition party leaders, Addis Ababa, September 2014), that Ethiopians, having gone through one of the most devastating wars in the Africa, are “no longer interested in getting into another round of violent struggles”. This could simply be due to war exhaustion or the informed fear of the negative consequences of political violence.

This argument, I suggest, is dubious at best, and is difficult to prove empirically. Especially in the near absence of viable insurgent groups operating among the people or trying to mobilize and lead the fight against the regime, it is very difficult to gauge the level of morale people would need to have to join armed struggle. In fact, few developments in post-1991 Ethiopia could lead us to question the basic assumptions that disenchantment with warfare per se is prevalent among the people at large. One important development is the remobilization—at different times, in

different places, and by diverse actors—of certain sections of the population. Since 1991, ethnic groups have been highly mobilized against other ethnic groups, resulting in some regions in high-scale inter-ethnic violence claiming the lives of hundreds and even thousands. The increasing scale of inter-ethnic conflict in the country has been recorded by many scholars (e.g., see the table in Abbink 2006b, 408-411), and is mentioned earlier in this chapter. Ethiopians also enthusiastically joined the Ethiopian national army to fight an external invader in the Ethio-Eritrean War of 1998–2000. Thousands of youths from diverse backgrounds and killils participated in the war for various reasons, including a strong sense of Ethiopian nationalism. Finally, and most directly related to insurgency, few of the most active insurgents—with all their internal problems, to which I will come shortly below—in the current era have managed to mobilize a large number of fighters to challenge the EPRDF’s state rule, especially in the early days of its power, a time one would expect the public morale to re-ignite warfare would be at its lowest. The OLF is the most striking example. By the time it entered Addis in 1991, it became the rallying point of an unprecedentedly large number of Oromo youth. According to an ex-OLF fighter (interview, Toronto, June 2014), its ranks suddenly increased from few thousands to more than 20,000 fighters. The towns of Oromiya were rocked by a multitude of optimistic youths who felt Oromo victory was at hand. Oromo nationalism came of age. After the falling out with the TPLF a short time later, a massive array of recruits were willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause of the Oromo and crossed borders to join the struggle. Although the outcome was a disaster for the rebels, the age of insurgent mobilization was by no means over with the downfall of the Dergue.

The same could be said with regards to a few other insurgent groups. The Somali in their bulk were mobilized under the influence of the ONLF after 1994, swelling their ranks into the

thousands, especially in the late 2000s (see Hagman 2014, 43). Although some reports point to the additional tactic of forced abduction as a tool of recruitment, even the Eritrea-based Tigrayan insurgent group, Tigrayan People Democratic Movement, may have about 20,000 fighters under its command, according to a recent UN report (2014). Finally, there have been many instances where youths from Ethiopia have actually fled to Eritrea to join one of the many Ethiopian insurgents based in the neighboring country. Although this has happened several times, it reached record level, according to a former EPPF senior member (phone interview, June 2014), immediately after the highly controversial election of 2005, in the aftermath of which around 200 people lost their lives. Disillusioned by the political situation in the country, youths especially from the urban and northern regions of the country picked up arms against the ruling party en masse. Hence, it is questionable to assume that insurgency in Ethiopia declined because of low morale among the wider populace.

Incidentally, it is important to point out as well that low/high morale as a concept should not be taken as a given since it is usually through active mobilizational work—involving ideological, emotional, political, and military training and indoctrination—of rebel organizations among the masses that the latter are compelled to embark on the struggle. Hence, the question in this connection is why there have been no rebel organizations emerging in post-1991 Ethiopia making substantial efforts to mobilize people and challenge the status quo as the pre-1991 insurgents did?

The next chapters will try to answer this, as well as the more general question about variations in insurgency levels in post-1974 Ethiopia, by resorting to more useful variables. As the foregoing discussion has illustrated, some of the underlying factors listed in the civil war literature can best be taken as necessary conditions for the onset of insurgency, but they are not sufficient

conditions for it, nor can they explain disparity in the level of insurgency in the Horn country.

Other factors, such as those about the ending of conflicts and war fatigue, miss out some crucial aspects of insurgency in Ethiopia.

Chapter 4

Organizational Capacity of Insurgents, 1974–91

The Dergue's period was turbulent, seeing very little respite from violent confrontation between the state and its opponents. However, not all parts of the country witnessed equal levels of insurgent activities throughout these years. While some regions were hotbeds of fierce battles over the entire decade (high durability, high intensity insurgency), others accommodated intense conflicts but for shorter periods of time (low durability, high intensity). Some other areas did not experience the same level of deadly violent conflicts at any point in time, although insurgent-state confrontations existed with varying levels of persistence (low intensity, somewhat high durability). This chapter examines the question of what explains the varying levels of insurgency in Dergue's Ethiopia.

As I discussed in the theoretical chapter (chapter two), each of the above scenarios of insurgency levels could be explained by two sets of variables, that is, (1) organizational capacity of rebels, and (2) the level of their dependence on, as well as the interests of, foreign states providing support to them. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate the impact that organizational capacity can have on the level of insurgency a rebel group wages, reserving the discussion on external connections to another chapter. I will argue that the presence or absence of such organizational characteristics as leadership cohesiveness and centralization of the command structure in a rebel group significantly determines the durability and intensity of the insurgency associated with it. Such organizational qualities of a given rebel group greatly impact the group's capacity to mobilize, train, coordinate, and lead a massive number of people in a tenacious anti-regime struggle with exponentially high-level cost, especially in terms of human lives. In contrast,

internally divided or loosely organized rebel groups often cannot manage to challenge the state in any serious way, and if they can, they cannot sustain the struggle with high-level intensity for long—they either quickly disintegrate or continue to survive in name only. Their capacity to lead their constituencies through a series of tense struggles is very low. In all the high intensity, high durability wars of the Eritrean People Liberation Front(EPLF) and Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF); the high intensity, low durability violent confrontations of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF); and the high durability, low intensity insurgency of the Oromo Liberation Front(OLF), organizational strength of the rebels had a key role to play. The same is true with regard to the other insurgencies discussed not here but in the sixth chapter

This chapter will also trace the origins of and show the conditions for the maintenance of strong organizations. I will specifically focus on the institutional background of rebel leaders; the homogeneity/heterogeneity of their ethnic constituencies; elite decisions in terms of capitalizing on the homogeneity of the society they are situated in; and the enforcement mechanisms put in place to maintain discipline in the organization.

I have been deliberately selective in treating the different insurgent movements during the Dergue’s period. Although there would likely have been a dozen insurgents during the time in question, I will focus here on a few major ones from the northern, southeastern/western and eastern parts of the country. I have selected these movements based on their representation of different points in the scale of insurgency, as well as different regions of the country. I will treat a few other important rebel groups, which I have excluded here, in a separate chapter on international connections of insurgents, where they are better suited to the analysis. In what follows, I will first consider high intensity, high durability insurgencies in the north; and then move on to the southeastern/western high durability, low intensity cases; and finally discuss the

eastern high intensity, low durability insurgencies.

4.1 Prolonged and Intense Insurgency: Eritrea and Tigray

The insurgencies that managed to lead the rural struggle against the Dergue with remarkable persistence, and that also produced the highest number of casualties, are characterized by, among other things, coherent and centralized organizational make-up. The two most typical representatives of this group of rebel organizations are the EPLF and TPLF, which fought for the cause of Eritrean and Tigrayan self-determination, respectively.

4.1.1 The EPLF

The origins of the Eritrean imagined community could be traced back to the Italian occupation of the region in 1881. The Italians implanted the necessary structural conditions for the emergence of “Eritreanness,” which in turn was later used by the local intelligentsia as an “interpretative frame” for the grievance ordinary people faced in their daily lives. The establishment of Italy’s colonial rule, as Iyob (1995, 4) explains,

enclosed . . . disparate communities within a single administrative system. Between 1890 and 1941 Eritrea came into existence and a narrative of “Eritrean” experience began to unfold. As in the rest of colonized Africa, political, economic, and social transformations in varying degrees began to take place in Eritrea. The demographics of the territory changed as cities were built and groups migrated to new areas. Eritrean askaris fought Italy’s war in Libya, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

Thus was laid the foundations of a new transcendent identity, which not only persisted but was fortified and deepened in the post-Italian period. It was not without challenges, however. As

Eritrea was a “nation” of some nine different ethnic groups and two major religions with an almost equal number of followers, sectarian divisions also continued to be important, rendering the Eritrean question a complicated one at least until the end of 1970s. Various parties emerged reflecting the ethnic, regional, and religious diversity of the region. But at the same time, the Eritrean collective identity was for a long time shared by a wide range of the people of Eritrea, with varying degrees of attachment to it.

The more complicated question had to do with Eritrea’s relationship with Ethiopia. Some influential political currents supported unification with Ethiopia (heavily supported by the Ethiopian imperial regime) and others wanted independence from it. This most heated controversy of the time was finally resolved with the federation of 1992 that loosely tied Eritrea with Ethiopia under the auspices of the UN. The former was to have an extended autonomy with its own executive, legislative, and judicial prerogatives in its internal affairs. The federation was meant to please both sides—the Ethiopianists in both Eritrea and Ethiopia and the secessionists in Eritrea. However, it ended up pleasing neither (Zewde 2001, 183), as each saw it fall short of their cherished goals.

Ethiopian emperor Haile Sellassie, in particular, never supported the new arrangement, and he later came out as its foremost enemy. Eritrea’s thriving multi-party politics and relatively free press, as well as better record in protecting its citizens’ civil rights, especially Muslims, was simply unacceptable in a country where feudalism reigned and Muslims were considered second class citizens. In the emperor’s eyes, “an autonomous Eritrea, enjoying a relatively higher degree of democratic and civic liberties, was a dangerous anomaly in the oppressive political climate prevalent in Ethiopia” (Zewde 2001, 219). The Eritrean sense of distinctness from, and sometimes aversion to, the “Ethiopian” identity was also seen as a threat to the perceived

nationhood of the latter. Moreover, there were concerns pertaining to the Assab outlet to the sea, which was now formally in the hands of the Eritrean administration. Finally, a more economically developed Eritrea was an anomaly in the otherwise barely productive feudal mode of production prevalent in the rest of the country. The emperor thus decided to take gradual steps towards mending this “anomaly.”

Practical violations of the Federal Act began three years later, in 1955. First, the chief executive of Eritrea, who opposed the emperor’s intrusive overtures, was removed from office and replaced. “In 1956 all Eritreans found themselves under the occupation of the Ethiopian army” and “all political parties had been banned and dismembered with the exception of the Unionist Party, whose continued existence was permitted for propaganda reasons” (Haile 1987, 14). Then in the same year, Tigrigna and Arabic—the official languages of Eritrea—were replaced by Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia. Two years later, the Eritrean flag was abandoned in favor of the Ethiopian. Finally, in 1962, the Eritrean federation was officially annulled and Eritrea was annexed to Ethiopia as an ordinary province.

Aggrieved by the loss of their regional autonomy, Eritreans reacted swiftly and began their protracted struggle. In 1958, the Eritrean Liberation Movement emerged, following a diplomatic and political path towards curbing Ethiopian high-handedness (Negash 1997, 148). It was replaced by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in 1961, the organization that heralded the beginning of the 30-year Eritrean insurgency and that profoundly influenced successive rebel movements in different parts of the country. The ELF spearheaded the Eritrean national struggle into the early 1970s, mobilizing thousands of fighters. Its international fame was also remarkable; especially in the Arab world, it became perhaps the most recognized insurgent group operating in Ethiopia. However, seniority and enormous international backing, as I will discuss

in chapter six, could not guarantee success or survival in the face of another contender, the EPLF. Primarily due to its internal problems, the ELF fragmented into different splinter organizations. It later had successive battles with the EPLF until it was finally defeated and eliminated by the EPLF, assisted by the TPLF, by early 1980s.

The EPLF emerged out of a tenuous relationship among three disparate groups that defected from the ELF beginning from the late 1960s: the Ala group (Salfi Natsinet Eritrea), the People's Liberation Front (PLF), and the Obel group. Each one of these groups had its own disagreements with the ELF that it did not share with the others. The Ala group was formed by dissident Christians who felt marginalized by the ELF leadership (Ylonen and Zahorik 2017, 92; Pool 2001, 64); the Obels/Ubel, the most conservative of all splinter groups, came out opposing reformist tendencies within the ELF; and finally, the PLF rested somewhere between these two in terms of both composition and political position. A more religiously diversified group, the PLF advocated a "broad-based organizational congress" that would work towards "national unity" and the "removal of differences based on religion, race, region and descent" (Pool 2001, 65). The three groups needed one another to survive the imminent onslaughts of the ELF. Saleh Sabbe, the prominent foreign liason and apparently representing the PLF, channeled much-needed foreign support from various Arab countries to the fighters in the field and in return strengthened his roots inside Eritrea. Obels, hailing from the western province of Barka, provided access to the Sudanese border. "The larger PLF and Ala units," on the other hand, "provided the Obel group with much needed manpower" (Woldemariam 2011, 179).

Thus, while initially a self-imposed banding of divergent ideological tendencies, the EPLF later grew into a highly coherent organization. Achieving that success, however, was not quick. The process of integration started in 1972 when the three groups agreed to enhance coordination.

Points of concurrence included the issuance of a joint monthly publication, the announcement of common policies, and the organization of public seminars for fighters. A joint administrative committee was also formed under the name Gehteb on the basis of proportionality of the constituent groups (25, 21, and 11 from PLF, Ala, and Obel respectively). The structure of the committee was carved out on the basis of democratic centralism along the lines of the Marxist-Leninist tradition of leadership. The intention was to establish a semi-autonomous body that could oversee the overall functions of the new Front in the fields of intelligence, politics, finance, military, and health (Connell 2001, 353-356; Pool 2001, 74).

A complete merger of the armed forces, however, took more time to achieve. Attempts towards that goal turned out to be a challenge. Most notably, the Obel group, wary of the Marxist tendencies of the Ala group and fearful of its weaker position in a total integration, decided to leave the united front. Abandoned by two of their associates, the highest executive body of the Front went on with the plan of integration. Having managed to overcome the Arab versus Tigrigna tensions between the PLF and Ala members, the leaders of the two groups finally witnessed the birth of “a more defined political and organizational structure” based on “democratic centralism and obedience to the agreed line, dissidence against which was punishable” (Pool 2001, 75).

The EPLF subsequently went on to acquire not only leadership cohesion but also organizational coherence and centralization, facilitated by factors I will come to shortly. The basic structure of the EPLF since 1977 was typically Leninist: it was headed by a Politburo (PB, each of whose members led one of the eleven departments) and a Central Committee (CC) that made all the decisions under normal circumstances. The day-to-day decisions were made by a standing committee comprising the secretary, the deputy, and the chairmen of the political and military

committees. Until 1987, the general secretary of the EPLF was Ramadan Muhammed Nur, after which Isayas Afeworki took over and led the Front to its final victory in 1991 (Shinn and Ofcansky 2013, 149).

Many scholars who have studied the internal dynamics of the Front have been impressed by the tight and rigid organization it developed over the years. Typical of many Leninist parties, the EPLF practiced strict democratic centralism, most importantly in terms of ensuring strict party discipline, unity of purpose, and centralization of command structure. A critical aspect of its centralization was the full subordination of its military wing to the political one. Although the two were not distinct in terms of human power, they differed in terms of operation and organization. The Eritrean People Liberation Army (EPLA), the armed wing of the EPLF, waged the military struggle under the direct supervision of the EPLF. The subordination of the military to the political wing was key in keeping order and discipline among the rank and file throughout the struggle. As Gebru Tareke (2009, 69) notes, “without subordination of the military to the political and of the personal to the collective interest, armed activities and other military affairs would have degenerated into localized commandism . . . or . . . predatory warlordism.” This was never a problem for the EPLF.

The internal discipline of the Front’s fighting force was remarkable. Many observers described the commitment of the fighters as extraordinarily high, especially praising the strength of their morale in the battlefield. Tareke (2002, 246), in analyzing one of the EPLF’s most decisive and famous battles with the Ethiopian regime, the Red Star Campaign, states,

[D]riven by a passionate mix of nationalism and social revolution as well as by fear of extinction, the Eritrean insurgents fought with considerable skill and savage energy not to

“kneel down” in their own forbidding but advantageous territory. Through sheer will power and unflagging determination, the EPLF preserved itself and the Eritrean resistance, eventually winning political independence.

Notably, “desertion in the front was rare, and defection was even rarer” (Tareke 2009, 67). The loyalty and discipline of the fighters buttressed the tight command structure of the EPLF’s organizational set-up. This set-up thus played an essential role in helping the EPLF persist with its armed struggle so long and with such unmatched intensity.

In order for the EPLF to ensure its durability, it had to defend itself from a series of massive scale attacks from the Dergue, some of them renowned for their brutality. It had to engage a state army that grew exponentially from 1976 and was constantly and heavily backed by many countries, including the USSR. The Dergue considered the EPLF its most serious enemy and repeatedly marshaled a great number of its forces to annihilate it. According to Gebru (2009, 46), the state deployed more than two-thirds of its troops to fight the EPLF, as well as the TPLF, another insurgent in the north. The EPLF operated in a state of high risk not only because of the possibility of surprise attacks by the regime but also because of the unbalanced distribution of power between the two forces. For instance, in the Red Star Campaign of 1981, 22,000 of the Front’s fighters faced over 84,000 government troops that were backed by relatively advanced military equipment and foreign advisors and that could bring in weighty reinforcement if required.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Contrary to popular perceptions, the EPLF by 1980 was abandoned by its foreign backers. Sudan was in the midst of civil war, Iraq was in war with Iran, and other Arab countries were bogged down in confusion and disagreements over the 1979 Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel. It was in fact ironic that the Dergue was the one with immense backing of the USSR while preparing for and during the

The EPLF persistently and successfully repelled all the attacks against it and even went on the offensive after the mid-1980s. The outcome of the battles can be attributed to many factors, including the Front's effective use of safe hideouts in the inaccessible mountainous terrains of the Sahel, which protected its fighters from state attacks. But the more valuable factor to emphasize here in explaining the EPLF's durable and intense battles with the Dergue (and also its ability in defeating its rival, the ELF) is the organizational coherence of the rebel group and the strong commitment and discipline of the EPLF fighters. Such coherence in organizational structure and decisive control over its fighters helped the EPLF to maintain its insurgency with unparalleled tenacity and vigor until 1991. It gave the fighters unshakable will and discipline in the battlefield when confronting a regime with an international reputation for its viciousness. Unleashed with speed and coordination, the EPLF counter-attacks brought about utter confusion and disintegration in the ranks of the Dergue forces. The fighters stood in unison in commitment to the cause and obedience to their leaders, which had by then emerged as an exceedingly coherent body.

How did the EPLF achieve success on both fronts of creating a strong organizational capacity, that is, in attaining leadership cohesion and organizational centralization? Based on the theoretical formulation presented in chapter two, there should be at least four important factors to explain this: the common institutional base of the leadership; the putting in place of enforcement mechanisms; the pre-existing sense of societal collective identity; and elite decisions to exploit

execution of the battle. Soviet advisors took an active part in the training, planning, and execution of the war (Ministry of National Defence, in Tareke 2002, 477). I will discuss this further in another chapter.

existing opportunities to build a strong organization. All four of these can be seen working well in the case of the EPLF.

First, the EPLF leadership acquired its noteworthy coherence in large part due to the common institutional base that the leaders shared before the establishment of the Front. Most of the leaders had had some bond or ties of friendship because they had experienced a shared institutional belonging. As Pool (2001, 84) asserts, “ties of friendship and shared political activism prior to joining the struggle linked several of [the leaders] together.” Many of the Politburo members were intimate friends and had gone to the same high school or university in the country during the imperial era. Some also spent time abroad receiving military training as would-be fighters for the cause of the liberation struggle. Such social-institutional factors facilitated unity within the leadership.

Along with their shared institutional base, the leaders took further measures to enhance cohesion within their ranks by entrenching their vision of creating a centralized and coherent structure. They put in place critical enforcement mechanisms to establish discipline and loyalty and ensure a tight command structure through the entire organizational structure. Among the instruments they used to this end, two were crucial: a secret party and intelligence. The party, known as the EPRP,⁵⁵ had a structure of its own: including a PB, a CC, and a cadre school. The party was known only by those who belonged to it and who were characterized as the “the most committed, active and ideologically sound” (Pool 2001, 92). Not even all CC members were members. As part of its function, it “provided ideological guidance into a socialist future” (Tareke, 2009, 67), and also helped in more practical terms, for example, in coordinating the leadership electoral

⁵⁵ Eritrean People Revolutionary Party, not to be confused with the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party, another party established by the Ethiopian urban intelligentsia in 1972.

process, and campaigning for policies at congressional meetings. But perhaps its most significant role was to solidify the “camaraderie among the chosen few” and the “buttressing of Isayas’ position” (Ibid.).

Intelligence was the second method of producing conformity and order. The EPLF’s security system was known for its efficiency and far reach. Known as the Halewa Sewra (Welde Giorgis 2014, 276; Tareke 2009, 67; Pool 2001, 94), it conducted surveillance with the help of secret cells and a network of spies, using a sophisticated system of codes for communication and record. Targets ranged from members at the battlefield to Eritrean refugees and ELF operatives in Sudan and the Ethiopian regime. Among the fighters, the role of creating order through the imposition of threat of surveillance and punishment was only limited to a few, but significant, circles. The majority of the fighting force in the EPLF was committed to the cause.

A critical factor—and considered as part of the enforcement mechanisms—that allowed the nascent organization to emerge as a coherent centralized fighting machine was how internal dissent was handled. The leaders dealt with such threats in unison and as swiftly as possible. A threat of fragmentation within the EPLF emerged during the formative stages of the Front in 1973, when some veteran fighters challenged what they saw as authoritarian practices of the leaders of the Front. Sensing he was a target, leader Isayas Afeworki ordered the summary execution of 11 dissidents, effectively ending the possibility of any debilitating internal rebellion for years to come. The “manka incident,” as it was later known, was possible mainly because Afeworki was able to bring the overwhelming majority of the leadership to his side (including, ironically, one of the senior leaders of the Ala group that initiated the crisis) and galvanize support of the army under his and PLF’s command. The dissenters, overwhelmed and isolated, could not fend off the Afeworki-Ramadan attack, and were destroyed without leaving any trace

(Woldemariam, 2011, 193-195). A crisis that was meant to sow seeds of division, the manka incident in fact helped to strengthen the solidarity of EPLF leadership and build a more coherent organization. After the incident, elements within the constituent units of the rebel group stressed the importance of “rigorous political education for the mass of the fighters, on democratic centralism and criticism and self-criticism as means of rectifying past mistakes from which ‘anarchistic elements’ and ‘opportunistic agents’ benefitted” (al-Tali’a 1976, in Pool 2001, 80). The in-group repression bore fruit, therefore, mainly because the majority of the leadership was brought in line with Afeworki’s position, who acted against his opponents before they attacked him. This case thus corresponds nicely with the argument in my theoretical chapter on the conditions for successful in-group repression in rebel groups.

The enforcement mechanism of military training also played an important role in effecting strict discipline within the organization. Training gave the EPLF a great deal of control over its fighters. The EPLF recruited fighters en masse through its far-reaching organizational branches, and indoctrinated and trained them rigorously. Almost all the fighters were volunteers and “there [was] no shortage of applicants” (Patman 1998, 126). Intense political and military training was offered to all members of the Front for at least six months, with women given special attention to accustom them to the harsh conditions of the field. This training—“in a very harsh, Spartan environment”—along with its role in creating a strong ideological and physical foundation for a highly committed army, also, according to Patman (1998, 126) “forged a camaraderie and effectiveness rare among any fighting force.”

Thus far, I have discussed the role of shared institutional belonging and enforcement mechanisms in the process of building a coherent leadership and centralized organization. In addition to these institutional variables, two other factors—one structural, the other agential—

also played essential roles in influencing the nature of the insurgent organization. The structural factor served as a condition for the effectiveness of the agential factor. The existence of a discursive—albeit inchoate—imagining of “Eritreannes” had the potential to transcend the otherwise multiple forms of diversity and division prevalent in the Eritrean society. This greatly assisted in the making of a coherent organization by provided the EPLF with a strong sense of purpose and common identity.

The EPLF took its Eritrean identity very seriously and used it extensively as a mobilizing ideology (Joireman 2003, 135; Iyob 1995, 123). The leaders/elites took it upon themselves to carve out a new organization that, by abandoning the ELF-style tribe-centered and internally divided group, stood above sectarian divisions. In other words, they chose to pursue a line different from their predecessors’ in trying to set-up an insurgent organization. The new leaders shared a strong critical ideological stance towards the organizational character of the ELF, which gave them a clear idea of how the new rebel group should be organized to effectively achieve its goals. Crucial here is the shared rejection of region-, religion- and faction-based organization of insurgency and the perceived need to transcend divisive fault lines and establish a truly nationalist liberation front on the basis of a strong sense of Eritreannes (Iyob 1995, 123-124). They instilled this ideology and discourse into the minds and hearts of members and the wider Eritrean society through massive campaigns and education emphasizing Eritrea’s unique and compact history, culture, and destiny. Special emphasis was given to the “origins of Eritrea and analyses of the its cultural and class composition,” as well as “reflections on the revolution and it goals, the identification of Eritrea’s friends (workers and oppressed peoples of the world, all progressive forces, the socialist countries) and enemies (Ethiopian colonialism, imperialism,

Zionism, internal reaction), and the tactics of the revolution, the handling of contradictions and the political economy of the ancient and modern societies.” (Connel 2001, 354).

Most importantly, its leaders never allowed sectarianism to infiltrate the organization at any level (unlike the ELF before it).⁵⁶ They rather transcended societal divisions of any form—religious, ethnic and regional—and projected a national imagination that transformed the entire organization, giving it a clear sense of identity, unity, and purpose. This, along with the powerful feeling that ensues from perceiving that all members are sacrificing everything under the banner of a collective identity and for the sake of an imagined community, gave the fighters’ mutual dependability its solid base.

This could not have been (easily) achieved without the previous foundations of an Eritrean identity—this being the fourth factor that solidified the rebel group—among the wider Eritrean society separate from Ethiopians.⁵⁷ As discussed at the beginning of this section, past colonial influences played a crucial role in the coming into being of this collective identity. As a result of several developments during the colonial era, “the regional seclusion and self-sufficiency of the nationalities” was shattered and the “free migration and movement from one region to another [within Eritrea]” was made possible (Yohannes 1991, 15). The Eritreans’ shared exploitation and victimization in multinational spaces of economic extraction (i.e., plantations and industrial

⁵⁶See the sixth chapter for more on how the ELF leaders, in contrast to the EPLF’s, chose to incorporate sectarian divisions within their organization, thereby contributing to its ultimate downfall.

⁵⁷ This exemplifies my argument that although rebel leaders play a role in shaping the identities of their constituencies, their power in this respect is limited by factors outside their immediate control. Where other pre-existing actors and structures already helped construct a semblance of common identity for a people who have been widely constituted by it for long, the task of the emerging rebels to further solidify and re-shape that appeal of common identity becomes much easier than when they operate among people where no such construction of common identity took place at all by pre-existing elites or structures. The EPLF and TPLF had had “Eritreannes” and “Tigrawayinet” by their side even before the Fronts’ coming into existence, while the OLF (see below) was not a beneficiary of any popular identity in the likeness of “Oromonness” when it launched its insurgency in Oromo lands.

firms), as well as the incorporation of colonial subjects into the colonial fighting force (in Libya and Somalia, but even against Ethiopia), along with shattering tribal insulation, created a sense of colonial consciousness among them and contributed to developing Eritrean nationalism. Thus, the re-construction of a collective identity by the EPLF was solidly based on the pre-existence of the seeds of such an identity in Eritrea. The structural and agential factors went hand-in-hand with solidifying the nascent organization.⁵⁸

In this way, the internal strength of the EPLF emerged and was consolidated, a strength that, in combination with geographic advantage, made its insurgency durable and intense. Many of the elements of the EPLF's organization and many of the factors that led to its genesis were shared to a great extent by the insurgent group to its immediate south, the TPLF. The two groups together thus made the northern front the most unstable of all regions in Dergue's Ethiopia.

4.1.2 The TPLF

The TPLF, an organization in the north that remained second only to the EPLF in its military might since the mid-1970s until 1991, had many things in common with the latter organization. It had similar leadership cohesion and centralization, and engaged in a similar level and manner of mass mobilization as its Eritrean counterpart. It would seem very likely by the late early 1980s

⁵⁸ A few studies dispute the pre-existence any collective Eritrean identity before the rise of the EPLF. Abbay (1998) in particular refuses to accord any significance to Italian colonialism in the construction of Eritrean identity. He claims that insurgent mobilization came before identity construction, which in turn came after military victory in 1991. This claim apparently defies logic and a substantial amount of literature on the subject. Mobilization and collective identity (re)construction cannot be seen separately; the use of some form of identity-based ideological tool in the process of mobilizing the masses is, by definition, a *sine qua non* aspect of any nationalist movement. In addition to that, the significance of Italian colonialism in shaping subsequent development of Eritrean collective consciousness—however unevenly distributed—is affirmed by a wide array of academic works on the subject (see, e.g., Iyob 1995; Yohannes 1991; Negash 1987 and Patman 1998). The further strengthening of that identity through the works of the Eritrean liberation movements is, however, correct and is acknowledged in this chapter.

for an observer with insights into the secrets of strong insurgency that the rebel movement was bound to sustain its insurgency with a similar level of visibility and finish it with the same outcome, too.

Tigray, the regional base of the TPLF and its ultimate object of liberation, was the center of the Axumite kingdom, now considered by many to be the predecessor of modern day Ethiopia. The region produced many powerful kings and warlords, the last one being King of Kings Yohannes the 4th. Subsequent leaders of Abyssinia and then Ethiopia sprang from the Shoan Amhara dynasty. However, despite the best efforts of these leaders to centralize administration throughout the country, Tigray always remained a political anomaly in the Ethiopian empire: it was the only province to have successfully retained its political autonomy and to have been ruled by a class of nobility that sprang from its own territory until 1974. This partly reflected the “prevalence of national sentiments in Tigray” (Young 1997, 30) during the pre- and post-Menelikan imperial era; but it also, in turn, helped to stimulate further Tigrayan national consciousness, as Tigray was left to pursue its affairs *relatively* segmented from the rest of the country. Despite its autonomy, however, Tigray was largely an inferior and marginalized entity in the universe of Amhara-dominated Ethiopian state structure. For many ordinary Tigrayans, but especially the urban Tigrayan intelligentsia of the 1960s, the Amhara rule was seen as a source of humiliation for the whole of Tigray and its children. Apart from its status as a political periphery, the region also underwent cultural subjugation, manifested in the imposition of the Amharic language as the official language of the state during Haile Sellasie’s reign. As peasants, who had long been ruled by their own people, came into contact with “police, court officials, tax collectors, church dignitaries, and governors” (Ibid., 31) speaking Amharic (in accordance with the law of the country), they grew steadily more frustrated with Amhara rule. This cultural

marginalization added to the already existing sense of humiliation and further fueled the development of collective Tigrayan consciousness. More importantly, since 1960, subsistence had sharply declined and poverty overtaken the bulk of the region, due in part to neglect by the center and in part to natural degradation. In the eyes of ordinary Tigrayans, this misfortune had national undertones, linked to the “political emasculation” of the region at the hands of the Amhara, whose domination was to blame for the misery of the people of Tigray (Markakis 1987, 251). This pre-existing sense of national consciousness had no doubt been weak before the advent of modernization in the region (e.g., in the form of building schools and constructing roads). It also competed with sub-regional affiliations within Tigray, which was manifested at times in an undercurrent of mistrust between people from western Tigray and those from the southern and eastern parts. Thus, the full-blown production and wider prevalence of Tigrayan nationalism had to wait for the arrival on the political stage of some ethnic entrepreneurs, the most important of whom turned out to be the TPLF elites.

The emergence of the TPLF as the sole inspiration of these causes and representative of the Tigrayan insurgency was not smooth. Like the EPLF, the TPLF, had to struggle with contenders before it managed to assert itself on Tigrayan soil (Berhe 2008, 97, 125, 142; Young 1994, 100-112; Tadesse 1998, 389-407; Hailu 2010). It was, however, more difficult for the TPLF because of the number and power of those contenders. The first and the weakest was the TLF, a nascent organization with a vision to create an independent Tigray. Elements within the TPLF were wary of its “narrow” nationalism but also, more importantly, disapproved of its close relations with an apparently monarchist anti-Dergue movement, the EDU. After negotiations to work together failed, the TPLF summarily killed some of the top leaders of the TLF, after which the organization ceased to exist as a significant force.

A stronger challenge came in the form of the EPRP, an organization with no shortage of human and material resources. Apart from their shared will to dominate the struggle in Tigray, the two organizations had fundamental ideological and tactical differences. The most serious source of conflict between the two organizations surfaced when the TPLF, following its ethnocentric philosophy of liberation, demanded the EPRP leave Tigray and relocate in a non-Tigrayan land (Hailu 2010). After numerous efforts to narrow the gap between the two organizations failed, they went to war. The TPLF, after losing ground at Ayga and Sobaya, was driven out of Agame in the first encounters with the EPRP in February 1978. It made a comeback a month later in a fierce battle, where it not only recaptured the lost lands but also expelled the EPRP from its base area. Following this, the EPRP was left without any base inside Tigray.

The most bitter struggle the TPLF conducted before it confronted the Dergue in earnest was with the EDU, an apparently nobility-led organization that sought to unseat the Communist government. Heavily supported by foreign governments such as the US and Saudi Arabia, and recruiting a massive peasant army, the EDU proved a much tougher challenge to the very existence of the TPLF. In this case, too, the two organizations tried to mend their wide ideological differences (one, monarchist and multi-ethnic; the other, Marxist and ethnonationalist) through multiple dialogues, but ultimately went to war in search of decisive conflict resolution. Although the outcomes of the initial wars were not in favor of the TPLF, it later re-asserted itself, changed its tactics, and launched debilitating attacks against its enemy. The EDU was finally irrevocably routed. By 1978, Tigray accommodated only a single insurgent force struggling to liberate it from the hands of the Dergue.

The key factor behind TPLF's military successes—both before 1978, but, more importantly, after that year—was its superior organizational capacity. The organizational set-up of the TPLF

was not significantly different from that of the EPLF, the mentor of many of its earliest fighters. Just like the EPLF, the TPLF followed the Marxist-Leninist line of democratic centralism. The congress—composed of fighters and representatives of mass associations—elected (at least theoretically) the CC, which in turn elected members of the PB; and the different departments were chaired by the members of the PB (Young 1997, 98). Although highly centralized like its ally in Eritrea, the pyramid of the TPLF organizational structure did not end at a semi-autonomous powerful individual at the top. The leadership was more collegial, and its members enjoyed strong camaraderie and mutual dependence. As Berhe (2008, 362) notes, “TPLF’s collective leadership was so impregnable that it was not possible to even detect minor political differences in it.” All the affairs of the Front, from top to bottom, were strictly connected to and controlled by them. Moreover, not unlike the EPLF, the military structure was totally subjugated to the political one, which was in charge of the overall struggle.

The internal strength of the TPLF was put to test several times in the field—in conflict with other insurgents and, more importantly, with its arch enemy, the Dergue (Berhe, 2008, chapter 6). While internal power helped to establish it as a formidable fighting machine, its victories, in turn, further boosted the fighters’ vigor. The Dergue unleashed several repressive tactics against the TPLF, all of which failed to achieve their goals of either exterminating or even checking the expansive potential of the Front. The TPLF’s victories were even more remarkable than those of the EPLF, for the former had no significant foreign support, especially in its earliest stages (as I will discuss elsewhere). The lack of adequate arms was a constant source of complaint and frustration within the Front, as the only supply of weapons was from the very force they were fighting against. Ordinary fighters were frequently reminded that the Dergue was the indirect supporter of the Front. Over the course of ten years (1975–85), the Dergue launched eight major

military campaigns against the TPLF, ranging from the most disorganized but massive 1975 Raza campaign (where more than 100,000 peasants went to fight the Front) to the most systematic 1980 campaign. However, none of them were able to reduce the fighting power of the TPLF, much less wipe out the insurgents in their hideouts, as the government had aimed.

The fact that the TPLF had a disciplined, well-organized, and highly motivated group of fighters led by a coherent and competent class of leaders was key to these battlefield successes. The fighters fought tenaciously and in unison under a unified and well-connected class of leaders. It is true that “the rugged topography of Tigray presented an immeasurable advantage to the TPLF” (Berhe 2008, 166), and—as I have already noted above under the EPLF—“Tigray and the entire northern part of Ethiopia offer an ideal terrain for guerrilla warfare” (Ibid., 167). But such a durable and intense insurgency could not have been due simply to the sheer luck of finding itself in and around northern Ethiopia. After all, while the rivals of the EPLF and the TPLF (e.g., ELF, EDU, and EPRP) were also based in such terrains, their fighting ability was nowhere near as strong as these Fronts. Their level of organizational capacity thus is a core factor that distinguished the latter from their contenders, and that brought about substantial battlefield variations among them.⁵⁹

The emergence of a coherent leadership and centralized organization in the form of the TPLF can be attributed—much like the case of the EPLF—to four important factors: shared institutional base of the leaders; enforcement mechanisms; the pre-existence of the seeds of collective identity in Tigray, and elites’ use of pre-existing identity to build a strong organization

⁵⁹ The ELF and EDU were prototypical cases of weak organization, and that contributed to their downfall. I will return to this point in the sixth chapter.

The TPLF leaders shared certain social and institutional backgrounds. As with the EPLF leaders, most of the TPLF leadership attended the same Ethiopian university and passed through the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s at the Haile Sellasie 1 University (now the Addis Ababa University). Some of them were active members in the student movement and had close relationships with one another at the time. These Tigrayan students later formed a Tigrayan university students' organization, calling it Mahber Gesgesti Behere Tigray (Progressive Tigray People's Movement) (Milkias 2003, 13). It was this organizational set-up that later evolved into the TPLF, laying down a solid base for the emergence of a unified leadership.

In addition to a common institutional base, the TPLF leaders, like the EPLF's, put in place certain enforcement mechanisms to ensure discipline and loyalty in the organization. In this case, too, intelligence and internal party structures were used to achieve tight command structure. Multiple arms of the Front surveilled and punished the wrong-doers. The self-defense groups "acted as police, kept tabs on bandits and criminals, weeded out and punished collaborators and spies, and hunted down deserters or defectors" (Tareke 2009, 106). The numerous zonal or village militia undertook these and many more tasks as well, providing logistical support to the Front. And finally, the Halewa Weyane—"whose shadow was everywhere and whose long arms were merciless," as one former member of the Front told Tareke (Ibid.,104)—helped to ensure discipline within the TPLF. Dissent was never tolerated, and any instigators challenging, among other things, regional representativeness or the undemocratic nature of TPLF leadership were summarily executed. In one case, instigators of the *hinfishfish* ("confusion"), having lost faith in the leadership following the battle with the EDU, worked clandestinely to replace it (Berhe, 2008). Although many fighters left the field in frustration as a result of the spreading dissension, the situation was effectively resolved when leadership became aware of it. All leaders stood in

unison against the opposition (except perhaps for one, see Woldemariam 2011, 236), and eliminated the sources of the “confusion” permanently and with dramatic violence. Indeed, the level of violence meted out taught all members the lesson that dissent was unforgivable, thus helping to solidify the organization (Young 1997, 134-131). As in the case of the EPLF, in-group repression worked because the leadership acted in near unison, and did so swiftly and determinedly.

The TPLF leaders also put in place structures of an internal party—the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT)—which facilitated centralization. The MLLT, however, was not a secret from the members of the Front, as had been the EPRP. According to the former chairman of the Front (Berhe 2008, 223-228), the TPLF’s future strongmen, Meles Zenawi and his associates, used the internal party to subsume all power within the Front into their control and effectively marginalize their competent contenders. Although the MLLT came into being a bit later in the Front’s struggle, it was an effective tool for giving the Front a monolithic shape and for the self-advancement of some of its ambitious fighters.

Military training—taking three to six months with a possible extension to a year—also played a very important role in producing conformity and raising the morale and skill of the fighters.

Training produced determined and able fighters who conducted their affairs in groups and relied on each other for all of their needs. Although there were defections, especially during times of severe crisis, and although peasants joined the Front for reasons other than the cause of the Front, most of those who stayed and fought developed a strong commitment and devotion for the cause (Young 1997, 35; Tareke 2009, 104).

Thus, a mixture of fear and rigorous training helped to build a remarkably disciplined army, one that fought aggressively and in chorus. As Berhe (2008, 117–18) described it:

The TPLF army was highly disciplined. Its behaviour exceeded the expectations of the people because it used to be common practice in Tigrai for an armed individual to exhibit coercion whenever s/he wanted something. If there was any one thing that earned praise for the TPLF, it was the way it maintained discipline in its army all the way through the struggle. Initially, all the leading elements of the TPLF were familiar with the manual entitled “Who is a Revolutionary”—a text that contained a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” for those engaged in a revolutionary and/or liberation movement. They strictly maintained the discipline of the army according to this manual. There was also a set of internal rules that told fighters what they could and could not do, accompanied by disciplinary measures to be taken if someone was found to be breaking the rules. . . . A fighter’s every single movement was under surveillance and he could not leave his unit even for water without the commander’s permission and if s/he had secured permission to leave, there would be someone accompanying him/her.

These groups of fighters turned out to be very useful assets, which, being at the disposal of the TPLF leadership, could be used wisely to withstand the challenge posed by war with a robust state.

Hence, the institutional base of the leaders and their putting into place various instruments with the ultimate aim of making the Front an effective fighting machine played a huge part in creating a strong organization. But the structural factor that eased the leaders’ success in effecting these organizational moves was the Tigrayans’ cultural homogeneity. The TPLF leaders were adept at

using it to their own common ends, skilfully re-creating and strengthening “Tigrawayinet”—on a par with EPLF’s Eritreanness—and using it as a powerful mobilizational tool to wage an active insurgency until 1991. All the challenges that the Tigrayan peasantry faced—which were by no means worse than the living conditions of other Ethiopian ethnic groups—were discursively reformulated by successive Tigrayan activists as sufferings deserving of a wide-spread feeling of grievance among Tigrayan masses. And the activists persistently and strongly presented the Amhara ruling class as being solely responsible for all their suffering.

The TPLF’s task in this regard was possible mainly because Tigray was a largely ethnically and religiously homogenous society, and because “Tigrawayinet” (Tigrayannes), although underdeveloped, had the strong potential, for historical reasons, to be a powerful unifying ideology to mobilize the masses (see above). This pre-existing sense of national consciousness and the cultural, religious, and linguistic uniformity of Tigrayans first of all helped to create a cohesive leadership and organization. Before anyone else, the leaders found in these elements the foundations of an organization with a clear sense of identity and purpose. The near absence of any serious tribal and ideological fault lines within the society at large⁶⁰ spared the new organization the subtle risk of incorporating the seeds of its internal fracture into its structures. The transcendent—however nascent—national consciousness helped the TPLF to consolidate its organization and vision of restoring the “lost glory” of an otherwise subjugated people.

The above expositions on the military experiences of the EPLF and TPLF point to the notable similarities in their organizational structures and the outcomes of their military struggles.

⁶⁰ As I mentioned above, sub-regional divisions within the wider region of Tigray were indeed present but they were not pronounced and deep-seated enough to frustrate the nationalist appeals of the Front. They proved to be quite flimsy and were easily trounced under the weight of Tigrayan nationalism.

Sharing, among other things, cohesive leadership and tight command structure—which were the results of certain institutional, cultural, and agential factors in both cases—the two Fronts managed to wage high durability, high intensity wars against one of the most robust states in East Africa.⁶¹ Their organizational capacity played a huge role in making this outcome possible. Thus, the nature of their organization can be taken as the standard by which to measure the strength of other rebel organizations. In addition, the outcomes of their wars shed important light on the organizational causes of high durability, high intensity insurgency. As I will demonstrate in the rest of this chapter and in the next, if any of the elements of a strong organization noted above are found absent—due to factors previously discussed—then this changes the intensity or durability, or both, of the insurgency of a rebel group.

4.2 Prolonged but less Intense Insurgency: Rebellion in Oromolands

Having looked at the high durability, high intensity insurgencies of the EPLF and TPLF, I will now move on to the high durability, low intensity form of insurgency. In this section, I will focus on the Oromo insurgency as an example this category of insurgency. The explanation I offered in the theoretical chapter for this kind of insurgency is a combination of weak organization, low foreign support, and quasi-independence from foreign involvement. I will examine the first factor below and leave the rest for a later chapter devoted to external connections of rebels.

⁶¹The two organizations also often strategically collaborated in waging wars, and this could have added to their battlefield successes. But I do not consider these collaborations as an essential factor to explain the scale of their insurgency. The most significant joint attacks against Dergue targets, for instance, came quite late, towards the end of the 1980s after the balance of power had already tipped in their favor, and hence, those attacks can explain more their success in overthrowing the regime rather than the persistence and the intensity of their wars with the Dergue.

The Oromo insurgency, like many of its southern counterparts, has its roots in the Ethiopian state formation of the late 19th century. With the southern expansion of the Menelikan state in the last quarter of the 19th century, many Oromolands were incorporated forcefully into the Ethiopian body politic. In some areas such as Arsi and Harar where resistance to alien rule was active, the expeditions were brutal and costly for the conquered. Those that accepted subordination with little resistance, such as Jimma, however, were spared the ordeals and trauma of war (Zewde 2001, 61-68). The aftermath of the conquests was not favorable for the larger Oromo masses in general. Despite their number (the Oromo are the single largest ethnic group in the country, constituting about 40% of the total population.), they were grossly underrepresented in positions of influence well into the 20th century. Furthermore, the bulk of the Oromo peasants lost their lands to the northern settlers and became tenants on their own lands, a problem that persisted until the overthrow of the imperial system in 1974. Any attempt to resist or demand justice was brutally suppressed. The modern-day Oromo nationalist struggle springs from these difficult times (Jalata 2005; Hassen 1998).

Two landmark incidents inspired the later-day Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) activists: the Bale Rebellion and the Matcha Tulama Association. The former (Tareke 1991, chapter 5) was a rather loosely organized rebellion by the Oromo of Arsi, who held a deep grudge over their triple oppression: they were Muslim conquered by Christians; peasants whose lands were taken over by northern settlers; and Oromo-speakers subjugated by Amhara-speakers.⁶² The rebellion, led by Waqoo Gutu, a traditional and religious leader, started in 1963, and continued fiercely until

⁶²Although Oromo-speakers, it should be noted that the extent to which their struggle was inspired by Oromo nationalism is very debatable. Oromo nationalist literature is keen to call the Bale incident as the first Oromo nationalist uprising, but other sources (including my own interviewees) take a different approach. These sources emphasize more of its class (Tareke 1991) and religious (Ostebo, personal communication, August 2014), or at best its tribal, tones than any nationalist feelings among the rebels.

1970, when the rebels were crushed by the British-backed armed forces of Haile Sellasie's government and Waqo was taken into custody. At about the same time, the Matcha Tulama Association was operating as a self-help association concentrating on development activities in some Oromolands (Hassen 1998, 69-70). It gradually went on to develop political ambitions that included the promotion of Oromo national identity. The organization thus roused the ire of Haile Sellasie's resolutely Ethiopian nationalist government, which passed a decision to eliminate it. The leaders of the association, aware of this decision, conspired to assassinate the emperor, but Haile Sellasie anticipated this, arrested the leadership, and banned the association. These two Oromo dissident efforts, coupled with a few other nascent Oromo cultural and intellectual cases of self-assertion and subsequent repression, significantly contributed to the birth of the OLF in the early 1970s.

The Bale Rebellion of the 1960s resulted in hundreds of refugees fleeing into Somalia. During their stay there, they met fellow Oromos from the Harar region who had fled the country after their attempts to revive Oromo culture were suppressed. These Oromos agreed to re-start their political activism in new ways and contacted foreign governments for help. Many of them travelled to different Arab countries to get military training, after which they came back to Ethiopia to launch a guerilla movement. They were, however, captured along the Somali border in 1969 by the Siad Barre government, which mistook them for supporters of the president's rival, Sharmarke, and put them in prison for five years. Undeterred by these events, a new batch of Oromo fighters was dispatched to the Harar region, and "the first shot was fired in 1974 by Elemo Qiltu", a former businessman and socialist activist based in Yemen (ex-OLF fighter and ex-OLF fighter and representative in the West, interviews, Canada, June 2014).

Meanwhile, Oromo activists in Addis Ababa were working on reviving Oromo nationalism through sensationalist publications such as *Kana Bekta* (“Do you know this?”) and the “Oromos: Voice against Tyranny.” They were contacted by a prominent activist, Hussien Sura, who was a former member of the MTA and behind the dispatching of the armed fighters to Harar. They all agreed to give the would-be armed movement an organizational shape, promising to prepare a formal leadership structure in two years time. As the preparations were underway, though, the Ethiopian Revolution broke out, which, according to my informants (ex-OLF fighter, interview, Toronto, June 2014) as well as other observers (eg., Markakis 1987, 261-262), complicated the Oromo armed struggle. First, the new regime in Ethiopia absorbed many Oromo figures, who mainly formed their own Marxist organizations but also had been members of the military junta and joined the political establishment. Second, the land-to-tiller policy of the Dergue made many Oromo peasants beneficiaries of the restoration of lands to the formerly alienated tenants.

However, the factors that initially complicated the Oromo struggle later lost significance. The fleeing of Oromo politicians from government-affiliated parties, the excessive exploitation of peasants by a state that earlier granted them land, and the continuation of authoritarian practises of the state alienated many Oromos from the newly emerging political order in the country. As popular grievances started resurging, the radicals in Addis Ababa went ahead with their plan and prepared a programme that emerged as the OLF in 1976. At the same time, the first batch of trained Oromo fighters detained by the Somali government was released, entered into Harar, and officially commenced the armed struggle.

The OLF’s armed movement met fierce resistance from the Ethiopian regime. At the beginning of 1974 and during the organizational formation in 1976, the Dergue set out to extinguish any traces of the Front. The two offensives could not achieve the regime’s goal, but did disperse the

insurgents (de Waal 1991, 69). After the 1978 Somali War, the regime began implementing policies of counter-insurgency against the Oromo activists. It put into place a programme of villagization, whereby numerous households were grouped into “centralised planned settlements” (Survival International 1988). While the official line was that villagization in Ethiopia was meant to “introduce social and economic change through a socialist agrarian transformation” (Lorgen 1999, 13), it was mainly used as a counter-insurgency mechanism. Because rebels got their material, moral, and security support from the population, moving the latter into camps/villages would make the former vulnerable to government offensives. Bale, Arsi, and Sidamo were the major targets of the policy; by guarding these villages with defense squads and controlling people’s movement, the government forced the OLF to re-locate its activities to the Harar area (de Waal 1991, chapter 13).

In 1980 the government then changed its tactics to undertake direct military action against the Front. They launched successive military campaigns, including a major one, Lash Operation, which mainly targeted the WSLF, but aimed at other insurgencies as well (i.e., the OLF). Supported by armour and helicopter, the army succeeded in squeezing out many of the OLF fighters from the eastern part of the country (de Waal 1991). Without any topographic hideouts like those in the highlands of Ethiopia, the OLF, active in the lowlands, had no choice but to shift the Front’s base of operation. However, the rural lowlands were more suitable for survival than urban areas, as they were remote from the center of power, and their relatively inaccessible forests, covering large tracts of land, made state incursion difficult. Before its defeat in the east, the OLF engaged the Ethiopian army in tens of major battles, in its operational areas of Harerghe and Bale (de Waal 1991, 84). By the early 1980s, the OLF moved to the west, although it still had commands in the east, southeastern, and central Oromiya (Reid 2011).

From that point on, its activities became more akin to guerilla warfare, operating in small units in that wide expanse. A long period of low-key insurgency set in, as the OLF was forced to focus less on fighting the Dergue and more on creating awareness among the Oromo. When the OLF began to intensify its activities in 1984, the government responded again by heavily bombing towns close to Harar, killing mostly civilians (de Waal, 1991). The reviving of the OLF as an insurgent group to reckon with did not come until the end of the 1980s, when it gained a strong foothold on the western front and established closer links with the TPLF. As the reign of Mengistu drew to a close, the OLF became a somewhat significant force that neither the Americans nor the victors of the Ethiopian Civil War—TPLF and EPLF—could ignore. But it was never considered an equal partner, and as events after 1991 would show, it was, indeed, not equal: the OLF was a force much weaker than the two northern Fronts, not a “super power” on par with them.

How can we explain the higher durability but lower intensity (as compared to the other insurgencies) of the OLF? The OLF managed to survive from its inception to the very end of the Dergue rule. Its durability can be explained by a mix of factors. The OLF, due to its weak organizational capacity and low level of foreign support (see chapter six), was unable to pose a serious challenge to the Dergue’s rule in the same way that, for example, the EPLF and the TPLF did. The military junta, therefore, rather than opting to focus on such a weak movement, changed its initial plan of completely destroying the Front and chose to deploy most of its armed forces and material resources in the pursuit of victory over the northern, central, and far eastern (especially the Somali regime) enemies, rightly considered more serious. The OLF was subdued whenever it showed any sign of resuscitation, but was otherwise left to survive and search for a victory elsewhere. In addition, the relative self-sufficiency of the OLF, having no external

dependence, also ensured its durability, compared to the Western Somali Liberation Front(WSLF) and the Somali-Abo Liberation Front(SALF)—to which I will return in the next chapter.⁶³

I will here devote more space to explaining the relative modesty of the insurgency that the OLF waged (i.e., its low intensity). Its activities were never at a scale that even distantly resembled those of the TPLF and EPLF. The cost in terms of human life of the war between the OLF and the Dergue was in no way comparable to that involving the post-1991 rulers of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The lagging of the OLF even seems ironic when considering that it claimed to represent the largest ethnic group in the country, approximately six times the population of each of Tigray and Eritrea. One might expect that this massive potential constituency, if well mobilized, could help bring about colossal political changes in the country.

The central problem with the OLF was organizational. The Front consistently failed to build a cohesive and centralized organization that could be deployed to the end of effective self-assertion against its wars, either with its competitors or the Dergue. Markakis (2011, 196) claims that “[t]he OLF leadership never functioned as a unit. Dispersed inside and out of Ethiopia, its members became separately engaged in an uphill struggle to build a functioning organization and establish a credible armed presence within the country.” De Waal (1994, 33) adds, “The OLF was unable to build a strong united leadership” throughout its existence. The relationship among the early bellicose leaders of the Front was especially notable. Instead of operating in unison against a common enemy, they underwent a highly tumultuous period of mutual antagonism and

⁶³ Another factor that could have contributed—however minimally—to the durability of the OLF is the remoteness of its base area and activities from the center of power and the partial inaccessibility of its area of operation.

mutual neutralization, which finally led to fragmentation and internal bloodshed. All of the leaders met only in 1988 for the first time to renovate the organization. The relationship between the Western (Wollega) leadership and the core eastern (Hararghe) fighters, who constituted the bulk of OLF fighting force, was never close. The eastern fronts (Harar, Arsi, and Sidamo) themselves could not organize and co-ordinate their political and military activities (Ofcansky and Berry 1993, 310-311). The overall command structure was loose and at times broken (ex-OLF member and current Oromo activist, interview, Toronto, June 2014), and furthermore, the military wing was never fully subordinated under and controlled by the political wing. “The OLF remained a more pluralistic and diffuse organization than the TPLF, with many different loci of power and authority, and differing local forms of organization. While this was democratic, it also meant that building an effective military machine was almost impossible” (de Waal 1994, 33). With such a weak organizational and mobilizational capacity, the OLF could never hold its ground against the onslaught of the Dergue or effectively win in combat with its Oromo contender. Already in poor shape, the regime’s successive campaigns against it further weakened it, and it lost some part of the east to government forces in the 1980s, as seen above.

The main reason for this failure to build a strong organization is found in the social structure of the Oromo people. This factor is very much in line with one of the central explanations I offer in the theoretical chapter for the emergence of weak/strong organizations: that is, the condition of collective identity among the people. In reality, the deep diversity and division within, and the extreme weakness of any overarching unifying identity among, the Oromo population, along with the repercussions of these factors on organizational coherence, can explain, to a great extent, the fragility of the OLF insurgency. These problems were so intractable that they made it very difficult for the Front to successfully mobilize the Oromo population beyond sectarian

divisions and under the banner of a strong sense of nationalism. Moreover, they also turned the organization itself into a reflection of those divisions⁶⁴. The contrast between this and the context in which the EPLF and TPLF emerged is striking.⁶⁵

The difficulty of cultivating an Oromo nationalism—which the OLF could have used as a unifying ideology—impeded effective mobilizing of the masses under a strong rebel organization. As many writers indicate, the Oromo have long been influenced by the cultural and political machinations of their diverse neighbors. The Oromo of Shoa, given their proximity to the center of power, have been subjected to such Abyssinian influences. The Ethiopian state took extreme care to curb the development of Oromo nationalism, as it was seen as a *bête noire* for maintaining the strength of Ethiopian nationhood. Oromo elites hailing from these places were assimilated into the dominant culture and passed as Amhara. They spoke Amharic and accepted Orthodox Christianity. The ordinary people, on the other hand, who did not even have the opportunity to assimilate, were forced to lead a life of humiliation. Neither of the groups of the Shoan Oromo considered their Oromo identity as an object of pride and, hence, worth reviving. In the political realm, the “northern Oromos have something of the Tigrean ambivalence towards the Ethiopian state: not only is secession a much less evidently viable proposition for them than for Oromos further south, but they have occupied leading positions in the state’ (Clapham 1989,

⁶⁴ See theoretical chapter and footnote 25 for further clarification on the relationship between collective identity (a societal factor) and leadership of rebel organizations (agential).

⁶⁵ Another reason OLF leaders found it difficult to establish a strong organization was the size of the Oromo population. It was next to impossible for a rebel organization to stretch through, according to the OLF’s measurement, “375,000 square miles, or, 600,000 square kilometers—a landmass larger than France, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium & the Netherlands combined” (OLF website, 2005) and mobilize a population that was estimated conservatively at 12,387,674 in the 1984 census (beyond 27 million according to the 2007 census).

216). The Oromo of the east, for their part, swayed under the influence of the Hararis and the Somalis. They adopted Islam and the cultural manifestations of their neighbors. The Greater Somalia project in the 1960s was especially a turning point in the competition for the Oromo mind and heart. The Somali regime not only organized the Oromo refugees in its lands to fight for the cause of Greater Somalia, but also considered them Somalis and gave them a semi-Somali name: Somali Abo. The regime and the WSLF it controlled envisioned an expanse of land that included such Oromo lands as Bale, Arsi, and Hararghe as belonging to the Somalis.

Two crucial internal factors helped eastern Oromos close ranks with the Somali: a common religion and hatred of the Amhara-dominated empire. As a result of these factors and the political reverberations of the time, many eastern Oromo joined the struggle against what was seen as Christian Ethiopia under the banner of Greater Somalia. The Abyssinian conquest of the eastern part of Oromo land and its subsequent ramifications brought about a certain mode of political thinking among the people. The establishment of the *naftagna gabbar* system was very important in this regard. This system involved displacing Oromo peasants from their lands and resettling them with Abyssinian soldiers, some peasants, and the church—automatically turning the former owners of the land into tenants for the settlers. The alienation was triple (ethnic, religious, and class) and hence rendered a sharp distinction between the settlers and the tenants. This clear dichotomy led to the cultivation of centrifugal mentality among the eastern Oromos, and secessionism became ubiquitous as a political orientation (ex-OLF fighter, interview, Toronto, June, 2014; Clapham 1989, 218). The Oromo of Wollega for their part came under the influence of foreign missionaries, who gave their children basic education and the Protestant religion. Finally, the Borana, on the southern edges of the country, retained their traditional political and

religious institutions and remained relatively immune from the influences of the north and the east.

The gap between the Oromo of these diverse places was so wide that few of them saw the name Oromo or the Oromo language as a point of commonality. In fact, many Oromo adopted different names for themselves, and others referred to them using different terms as well (see Ostebo 2009, 5-6; Lewis 1998, 40). The Oromo of Shoa were usually known by the name “Galla”, which, however, they interpreted as derogatory; Oromo of other places, as well, called them by the same name. The Hararghe Oromo were referred to as the “Kottu,” (farmers), which many of them, until recently, accepted. The Arsi called themselves “Islama,” demonstrating the priority they gave to religious identity. There was also a nascent regionalism in that area that went by the name “Arsumma,” but it was never fully developed. Similarly, the Jimma were proud to call themselves Muslims, and did not see themselves as Oromo at least until the end of the 1980s. As H.S. Lewis (1993, 4) rightly puts it, “There is much that divides the numerous and far flung Oromo people: subsistence and consequent ways of life, religious belief and practice, political structure, historical experience, and many aspects of custom and practice.” And Markakis (2011, 198) adds, “[E]ach Oromo tribe pursued its own destiny entirely independent of the others, and inter-tribal warfare was the rule rather than the exception.” The word Oromo was used by the very few modern and educated elites who chose to act as ethnic entrepreneurs and who wanted to transcend this diversity and bring together what they saw as one people (Chanie 1998, 96).

The OLF thus found itself in this very complicated situation. Its northern counterparts, the TPLF and, more importantly, the EPLF, were also operating in somewhat “complicated” situations, with tribal and ideological divides among the peoples they wanted to mobilize. However, as I

discussed above, the already constructed sense of common collective identity (“Tigrawayinet,” anchored in the collectively perceived “glorious” history of Tigray and the cultural homogeneity of the region; and Eritreannes, the shared sense of history of the people under Italian colonial rule⁶⁶) facilitated unified mobilization for a common cause. The northern rebel leaders merely had to tap into these already existing elements of collective identity to further solidify and deepen the sense of belonging to “oppressed” nations among their communities and to build coherent organizations. In other words, the rebels could re-construct already constructed overarching identities widely recognized by their respective communities at the start of the insurgencies. In contrast, the OLF in the 1970s and 1980s was waging its nationalist insurgency among a “people” whose very wide territorial distribution and very limited sense of common history and culture made massive scale mobilization for a common cause a very arduous task. This problem severely stunted the potential of the Front to mobilize the masses and intensify its struggle. “Lacking a broad peasant base,” Markakis (2011, 198) notes, “the insurgency flickered on and off in remote edges of the state, scarcely noticed by Addis Ababa [especially until 1980s].” The OLF, unlike the EPLF and TPLF, had to shoulder the responsibility of teaching the Oromo about their Oromoness—almost from scratch—at the same time that they had to recruit and train them as fighters for the cause of the Oromo. Many resisted the call to be identified as an Oromo,⁶⁷ thinking of it as an alien identity, and chose to keep their local and tribal identity instead.

⁶⁶The case with the Eritreans was even more profound: common Eritreans had been widely mobilized by the Italians under the banner of “Eritreannes” to fight the Ethiopian army during the colonial era.

⁶⁷An interesting example is given by Markakis (1987, 263). When the OLF reached out to the Arsi Oromo associated with SALF “on the basis of their common Oromo identity, proof of which was the Oromo language,” the Arsi replied in a telling way: “A common language [is] not sufficient proof of ethnic or political unity.” They even cited English, Arabic, and Spanish as examples to prove their case. They also

Of even greater negative import for the Front—and actually a more important point in explaining the limitation of the OLF-led struggle—was the fact that OLF itself came to mirror, especially at the level of its leadership, the divisions in the Oromo society, which consequently shattered it. This acute division within the leadership—a primary source of organizational weakness, shown in the theoretical chapter—contradicted the character of a coherent organization. As seen above, the vision of the OLF was an amalgamation of the liberationist aspirations of a few Oromo elites of different areas. The precursors of Oromo struggle for independence could be found in all the western (the Wollega Confederates, 1941), eastern (Balle Rebellion), and central (MTA) parts of today's Oromiya. Oromo elites from all these places also contributed towards forming the OLF. Although the common cause of attaining liberation for Oromiya brought these elements together, their differences never diffused into a sense of Oromo nationalism. No matter how focused each actor was on working for the Oromo cause and “teaching followers the importance of Oromo unity” in their own ways (ex-OLF member, interview, Toronto, June 2014), the deep-seated sectarian and cultural divisions could not be bridged among the leaders when they came together to lead the organization. Self-awareness of regional, religious, and ideological differences persisted. It did not take long for perceived differences to surface and fragment the organization, with serious repercussions for the movement it spearheaded.

The turning point came in 1978, when the OLF held its First National Congress. At the time, the Dergue was dismantling Oromo-dominated organizations operating under a legal banner and which were part of the establishment. Persecuted, many of them fled to Chercher (Harar) to join the OLF and attended its congress. Serious disagreements among the prominent military and

“listed numerous differences between themselves and other Oromo groups” and finally got the OLF expelled from Somalia by pressing the Somali regime to do so (Ibid.).

political leaders brought the OLF to the beginning of a long-standing conflict. A multitude of factors were at the center of the disagreement among the leaders, as two ex-OLF fighters and members reported (interviews, Toronto, June 2014). One aspect was conflict over power between newly fled ex-members of Mesion and Echat and the top OLF military commander in the field, Jarra aba Gada. A more important factor, and not incompatible with the previous, was the culmination of a long-running mutual distrust between the Harar Muslim Oromo and the Wollega/Shoa Protestant/Orthodox Oromos, who were seen by the former as offshoots of Abyssinia's oppressive system. A corollary of this last point is the serious ideological-political differences between the two as well. The eastern Oromos, having nothing in common with the system they set out to fight, pushed for independence for Oromiya; the central/northern Oromos, on the other hand, were perceived by the easterners as "not wholeheartedly committed to the cause because of their cultural/religious background", which they share with the Abyssinians (ex-OLF member and representative of the organization in the West, interview, Toronto, June 2014).

At any rate, the conflict within the leadership mirrored to a large extent the deep division within Oromo society along tribal, religious, and ideological lines, and it was also manifested in even more extreme ways among the leaders: As the events unfolded, a prominent Oromo intellectual of Wallaga background was killed by a supporter of another from Harar.⁶⁸ This started a series of

⁶⁸ According to an informant (ex-OLF fighter with close ties to Jarra abba Gadda, a leading ex-OLF member, interview, Toronto, June 2014), one of the supporters of Jarra killed Baro Tumsa, the ex-leader of Echat and a prominent Oromo activist and intellectual. Lencoo, another long-time leader of the OLF, barely escaped with his life (his interview with OMN, June 2014).

These and other subsequent internal conflicts could not have been resolved by a resort to in-group repression, as was the case with the TPLF and EPLF. This was because there was no (near) consensus among the elites on how to resolve the conflict nor was the conflict just elite-based: it was a reflection of deeper sectarian divisions within a society enjoying little unifying sense of collective identity.

deadly confrontations between supporters of the two different cultural and political tendencies in Oromo nationalism. This incident deepened the mutual suspicion among these Oromo elements, and continued to do so for many years to come. One notable outcome was the shuffling of the new leadership of the OLF (dominated by Christian Wollega elements) and the split of a major current within the OLF (led by Jarra abba Gada and some of his supporters) to later form another organization: the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromiya (IFLO) in 1981. As a highly charismatic and top military commander from the Harar region, Jarra managed to take OLF member with him and also re-mobilize a good number of fighters from his region. By then the OLF had a little more than 7000 soldiers and the IFLO was fighting with around half of that—which were considerable numbers (ex-OLF fighter, interview, Toronto, June 2014; Tareke, 2002, 468-469).

The division had two major implications for the nationalist cause. First, it pushed the OLF (or the IFLO) further away from any possibility of exercising control over the identity and territory of the people it claimed to fight for. The OLF was now in deep competition with another significant force on Oromo lands, and the already existing division within Oromo society—reflected within OLF leadership—was, in turn, exacerbated by the division within the rebel forces. Second—and closer to the topic of organizational build-up—the conflicting regional and religious currents (especially the Wallaga vs. Harar/Arsi division) within Oromo society continued to disrupt the OLF internally until the downfall of the Dergue, and precluded the forming of a centralized command structure—that is, when the leadership assumes firm control over the entire organization. Strict discipline within the army and deep loyalty to the cause and organization were in short supply. And in such a divided organizational condition, any efforts to put in place enforcement mechanisms such as intelligence and punishments would have only fomented the

sectarian divisions within the Front, as punishments take (perceived) sectarian lines and escalate inter-tribal grievances. Military training was also offered in the Front, but it could not transcend sectarian conflict.

In addition to the social structure of the Oromo population, the absence of a shared institutional base that could unify leaders was also an important factor precluding leadership cohesion within the OLF. Unlike the EPLF and TPLF, the major and early OLF leaders came from quite diverse backgrounds. Some attended university and had roots in the Ethiopian student movement, later joining the political establishment at the center until they fled from it. Others came from rural peasant backgrounds and never went through the university system in Ethiopia. A few of these had a strong connection with the Arab world, having resided and undergone military training in different parts of the Middle East. The differences in the social, religious, cultural, and ideological backgrounds of the leaders, compounded by the absence of any institutional base to facilitate a smooth relationship among them, shattered the unity of the organization, rendering it an ineffective fighting force. The combination of structural and institutional factors thus made the OLF the very antithesis of the TPLF or EPLF.

4.3 Short-Lived but Intense Insurgency: The Ogaden

As the theoretical chapter demonstrated, the scenario of low durability, high intensity insurgency can be the result of weak organization, high foreign support, and high dependence on an aggressive state that later turns conservative.⁶⁹ The WSLF embodies this set of factors. While I

⁶⁹Or weak organization and quasi-independence with strong foreign support, as is the case with EDU and ELF. See chapter six.

will examine the role of the international factors in another chapter, here I deal with the other component of the explanation, that is, the organizational.

The Somali of Ethiopia have long been aggrieved by what they have seen as an alien system dominated by Christians and Amharas being imposed upon them. Resentment intensified especially after the British gave away the whole of what was then known as the Ogaden to the Ethiopian monarchy in 1954. Beginning from the early 1960s, organized groups started to operate against the Ethiopian government. One major group was the Nasrullah, established by an academic based in Somalia, Ibrahim Hashim. An ex-Nasrullah activist reported that the group waged an armed struggle for a few years but ceased to exist by the end of the first Ethio-Somali War (1964) when its leaders were either arrested or killed by Ethiopian forces (interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014). Although some small bands of armed groups such as the “Jaysh” continued to operate afterwards (ex-WSLF fighter, interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014), they could not effectively pose a serious challenge to the Ethiopian regime or Ethiopia’s territorial integrity. But this changed radically when the WSLF came into existence in 1975/76.

With the direct supervision and control of the Somali government (whose role I will come to in another chapter), the WSLF was established in a place close to Mogadisho. Although an outside power loomed large in the establishment of the Front, the fighters saw themselves as a domestic fighting force promoting the cause they had been championing for decades and for which they had tried to establish several other groups (five WSLF fighters, interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014). “We had our own interests”, according to one former fighter (interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014), “we just needed support from the Somali regime”. “Among the Ogaden militants were independent spirits who hoped not only to lead the struggle against Ethiopia, but to manage the affairs of their home region afterwards without undue interference from Moqadisho” Markakis (2011, 211) adds. The

WSLF's vision was the realization of independence from colonial rule, as the Ethiopian empire was seen at the time. "We are colonized," a WSLF leader declared, "and we do not see why we should be different from the rest of the world in securing our dignity and right of emancipation" (cited in Healy 1983, 105). The territory they intended to liberate stretched from the Awash river in the north all the way to Ferfer in the south, and El-Adde in the east to Moyale in the West—much of it contested by other ethnic groups, mainly the Oromo (ex-WSLF fighter, interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014; Markakis 1987, 225). While almost all of its rank and file came from the Ogaden, some of those who controlled the Front were key officials from Siad Barre's government, including the secretary general Abdullahi Hassen (Ibid.). A number of Hararis were also present among the leaders (ex-WSLF fighters, interviews, Jijiga, Dec 2014). Amassing an impressive fighting force, estimated at 30,000, the WSLF set out to contest the power of the new Ethiopian regime over its eastern territories.

The WSLF started its insurgency when it got the green light from Somalia. Early in 1977, the WSLF, waging fierce battle, succeeded in capturing town after town in the Ogaden region by defeating the Ethiopian army. The high morale of its fighters was thus boosted even further by these rapid victories (WSLF fighters, interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014). According to my informant (Ibid.), the battles with the Dergue, especially during the initial stages of its insurgency, were "quite intense"⁷⁰; the WSLF alone lost around 5000 of its fighters in the span of its existence, between 1975 and 1982. By the time the Somali Army sent troops into Ethiopia at the start of the Ethio-Somali War in 1977, the WSLF controlled much of the region and had begun preparations to administer it formally. Its dream of permanently controlling these places, however, was

⁷⁰The initial intensity of the WSLF's insurgency is attributed to huge foreign support, as I will show later in the dissertation.

shattered when its backer, the Somali army, in an ironic move, took away all the lands under its control and reserved the conduct of war-making for itself (Markakis 1987, 228-231). At the same time, the Dergue went on fighting WSLF units until it had severely weakened the Front's insurgency.

It could be argued that external intervention caused the eclipse of the WSLF, as many of my informants concluded, since the WSLF went into decline after the intervention of the Somali army, which was detrimental to the WSLF's power in the Ogaden. While I will treat this topic in the sixth chapter, it is important to point out here that although foreign intervention was an important factor in the WSLF's recession and final demise, it was not the only one. Problems within the Front itself contributed to the insurgency's final crash in the mid-1980s. Even without foreign intervention, the WSLF did not have the internal capacity to sustain its insurgency with consistent intensity. The WSLF, for example, failed to build an organization with a tight command structure. Within the different zones of the Front—even though they were in the end formally headed by army officers (Markakis 1987, 227)—inter-zonal coordination was weak and the leadership–guerilla relationship was not close. In fact, elements within the zones, rather than acting in unison and cooperatively to fend off attacks and strike enemy targets, often competed and even fought one another. The Front lacked discipline and unconditional loyalty to the overall organization and its leaders, which severely limited its potential to sustain its wars against the Dergue.

The major reason behind these organizational problems was agential (the elites did not want to exploit the over-arching Somali identity), although structural factors (the problem of deep divisions within the Somali society along clan and sub-clan lines), certainly posed some important challenges as well.

The WSLF was not an organization that aspired to transcend tribal/clan divisions within the Somali society, as the EPLF did. It was not a Front whose structures and vision were constituted by a unifying collective consciousness and which fought for the full realization of the ideals of a transcendent unified community. Instead, it was fully captured by sectarian divisions that permeated the society in which it operated. The leadership allowed⁷¹reproduction of Somali clanism/clannishness in their own ranks—with serious repercussions; this highlights the centrality of socio-cultural factors—and what elites make of them—in influencing the strength or weakness of a rebel organization. As Tareke (2009, 224) explains, ““The WSLF was as fractured as the Somali community itself.” Its very structure attests to this: the WSLF was organized into three commands, each in turn divided into six divisions, and each of these having its own zone of operation. Each division represented clans, and each zone “roughly coincided with a sub-clan” (Ibid, 187). The centralization of the Front was thereby undercut, as fighters in each of the divisions and zones tended to espouse loyalty first to their superiors from the same clan/sub-clan, rather than to the Front or its cause. In fact, and worse still, the antagonistic relationships among the different lines of division in the Somali society were at times on full display within the Front’s structure, with dire consequences for the Front’s wars. Thus, the already difficult war that the WSLF was fighting with the Dergue was made worse by the lack of discipline of its fighters, and the absence of full political and military coordination among them. The enforcement mechanisms put in place—such as military training offered by the Somali government in the camp near Moqadisho (Markakis 1987, 228)—were not enough to bring about perfect order and centralization within a Front divided along tribal lines.

⁷¹As perhaps sectarianism (clannishness) did not prove to be an inescapable reality in Somali society. See below.

The divisions within the rebel group increased as the war continued. The clans “quarreled, competed for water and pasture, and jealously protected their respective zones not only against government forces but also against one another” (Tareke 2009, 187). Even in the face of state repression, they were either unwilling to come to one another’s rescue, or if they did, were very sluggish. As the state struck the Front’s units from different angles, “they were not quick enough and were often reluctant to aid one another” (Ibid.). WSLF leaders, in a desperate attempt to weed out clannishness from the Front, declared the espousal of clanism as an offense punishable by death—but the threat came too late. In the final analysis, the “WSLF remained fractious and too weak to withstand a concerted assault like [Operation] Lash” (Ibid., 224). The notion of establishing a coherent organization thus proved to have been a chimera, with grave consequences.

To make matters worse, the Dergue exploited this clan division within the Somali society to give the WSLF the final blow. The Isaaq clan in Somalia had serious grievances against Siad Barre’s government and its ally, the Ogaden-dominated WSLF, with reported human right violations—murder, looting, rape, discrimination in access to social services etc.—against the clan since the end of the 1970s (de Waal 1991, 93). Members of Isaaq clan responded by forming the Somali National Movement (SNM) in 1981, and then negotiating with the Ethiopian government to provide them with a base area and arms. The two Somali groups fought vigorously at the beginning of the 1980s, during a time when the WSLF was breaking down over internal problems and external pressures and hence could not stand up to the challenge. After inflicting successive damages on the WSLF’s fighting power, the SNM managed to cut “the WSLF off from its rear bases in northern Somalia” (Ibid., 94). This brought the already troubled Front to its near end. While it could have been resuscitated, and there were indications that it could have

continued as a low-key insurgency, external intervention obviated that possibility. This will be treated in the sixth chapter.

How can we understand the origins of clan-based sectarianism within the WSLF? Is the problem mainly structural or agential? That clan-based sectarianism is a characteristic feature of the Somali society is well documented in the literature and it only requires a brief mentioning here. “The clan-system is the most important constituent social factor among the nomadic-pastoralist Somalis” and this “segmentary lineage system can be differentiated into categories of clan-family, clan, sub-clan, primary lineage and mag-paying group as divisions of varying size” (Lewis 1961, 4). The dominant scholarly position on the nature of clan in Somali society, inspired by Lewis, insists that it is the “eternal and immutable bedrock of the Somali society,” (Markakis 2011, 57) and that “the clan is basically the same phenomenon as it was in the 1890s” (Lewis 1994, 233). The clan “represents the social division of people into corporate political groups. By reference to his ancestors, a man’s relations with others are defined, and his position in Somali society as a whole is determined” (Lewis, 2).

This view contrasts, however, with another that takes into consideration the historical forces and efforts contributing to the emergence of Somali collective identity, despite clan divisions. The first was Italian and British colonial experiences during the Second World War and shortly after it. During this time, most Somali-inhabited territories came under a single centralized administration. The Italians first incorporated the Ogaden into Italian Somaliland during their 1935 occupation of Ethiopia. After the defeat of the Italians in the Second World War, the British gradually took over the administration of almost all of the Somali-inhabited territories and put them under one “unified military administration” (Schraeder 2006, 113). The creation of such an entity allowed the free movement of people and ideas among previously administratively

separated peoples (Ibid.). “The most notable development under British military rule,” as Laitin and Samatar (1987, 63) suggested, “was the growth of a new and fervent sense of national awareness.” “In the mosques and markets, in public and private meetings, urban Somalis began to question the legitimacy of colonial rule, *to call for political unity, and to help debate large, supra-tribal issues*” (emphasis mine). Moreover, “anti-colonial sentiment [proved to be an] important rallying point of Somali nationalism” (Schraeder, Ibid.). Such sentiments continued after decolonization as well, spearheaded by different “elite-based parties committed to the cause of Somali nationalism” (Ibid.).

Although there was no pan-Somali political party in the Ogaden region before 1960, a widely spread sense of collective identity, while perhaps not robust, was nevertheless visible. Despite the Ogadeni reluctance to melt into the “pan-Somali state,” which they resisted to avoid losing control over their resources, “several events nonetheless demonstrated nascent popular pan-Somali sentiment among the Ogaden that would fully blossom in the 1960s and the 1970s”:

The most notable incident occurred in the Ogadeeni town of Jijiga in 1948 when the withdrawing British authorities lowered a Somali Youth League flag that had been hoisted by Somali nationalists to protest the Ogaden region’s return the following day to Ethiopian sovereignty. The British action unleashed a popular riot that resulted in dozens of casualties. (Schraeder 2006, 115–16).

The several attempts of subsequent nationalist movements in the Ogaden to prop up resisting Ethiopian rule, and even Ethiopia’s repressive state measures against them, also helped strengthen Somali collective identity among the Ogadenis. All in all, the “heady nationalist era of the 1950s and 1960s fostered a shared elite image of injustices perpetrated on the Somali people

at the hands of the colonial powers and fostered idealistic beliefs in the commonality of the Somali cause” which was deemed to “restore the dignity of the Somali people” (Ibid., 128–29).

Hence, the primordialist assumption that takes clannishness as an irredeemable trait of Somalis is faulty, failing to consider the several historical forces that worked towards the emergence of collective Somali identity among the Somalis of the Horn in general and those of the Ogaden in particular. It is an undeniable fact that “clan is a critical variable that must be taken into account in any attempt to fathom Somali political behaviour” (Markakis 2011, 57), but there is another side to this behaviour that this perspective neglects. By the 1960s and early 1970s, an inchoate collective national identity, as well as unique cultural and religious homogeneity,⁷² existed in parallel with clan divisions. It was arguably a task for any Somali insurgent group emerging at the time to tap into either of these alternative identities and try to build an organization in accordance with an ideology based on its decisions.

Thus, at the time of the WSLF’s establishment, favorable structural opportunities were in place that its leaders could have used to solidify Somali identity and effectively rise above tribal divisions. However, similarly to the ELF leadership (see chapter 6), the WSLF did not make any strong efforts to build a rebel group to transcend sectarian divisions. Because they founded the organization on the basis of clan divisions that permeate Somali society, they installed in the organization the sources of its own internal degradation. Their later threat to punish members for espousing clannishness in the Front simply demonstrated a belated discovery of the internal problems, as part of frantic measures to stem the tide after it had been too late. Hence, in its failure to use the Somali, or at least Ogadeni, collective identity as the sole source of inspiration

⁷²The Somali are over 99% Muslim and remarkably homogenous culturally. The contrast with the Oromo is striking.

and instrument of creating a cohesive organization, the WSLF's case may be more similar to—albeit not exactly the same as—that of the ELF than the OLF: the weight of the structural factor—the severe divisions within the society at large and the near absence of collective identity—played a less important role in explaining organizational crisis than did the elites' failure to re-create or re-solidify existing threads of unifying consciousness.

Chapter 5

Organizational Capacity of Opposition Forces, 1991-2014

The primary relevance of the post-1991 condition of insurgency in Ethiopia to this dissertation is its usefulness as a case demonstrating low durability, low intensity insurgency—a category mentioned in the theoretical chapter but not covered in the previous chapter (which discussed the high durability, high intensity; low durability, high intensity; and high durability, low intensity). The post-1991 period in Ethiopia saw an overall sharp decline in the level of insurgency in the country. There have been some reports of clashes between little known insurgents and the Ethiopian army, which, if independently verified, have mostly been low-key and short-lived.⁷³ Thus, insurgency in post-1991 Ethiopia could in general be characterized as low durability, low intensity. In this chapter, as in the previous, I will consider the organizational capacity of the rebel movements in explaining the reduction of collective violence. As pointed out in chapter two, foreign support, level of dependence on foreign powers, and the strategic interests of those powers are also significant in explaining low intensity, low durability insurgencies. I will deal with these external factors in some detail in the next chapter.

The discussion will proceed as follows. By way of introducing the coming into being of a new regime in 1991, I will first consider the processes that led to the establishment of the TPLF's hegemony as the ruling party in Ethiopia. This clarifies the political foundations that led to the

⁷³The most durable and deadly insurgency has been the conflict between the Ethiopian forces and the ONLF, but even this could be considered low-key by the standards of the Dergue's period. It is comparable to the scale of OLF's insurgency during the Dergue's period. Since we have already seen a case of high durability, low intensity insurgency when we saw the OLF, I will not be dealing with the ONLF in detail in this dissertation.

emergence of another round of popular grievance in Ethiopia that fueled opposition to the new regime. I will then go on to discuss the condition of insurgency in post-1991 Ethiopia, which to a large extent has been low in terms of both durability and intensity. I will deal with two examples of rebel groups that have espoused this type of insurgency. In both cases, my focus will be the causes and consequences of organizational problems.

5.1 The Prelude to the Transitional Period: The TPLF's Hegemony in the Making

For the reasons elaborated in the previous chapter, that the TPLF and the EPLF would dominate state politics in the transitional period was a fait accompli. Both fronts continued to score clear victories over the Dergue, especially after the mid-1980s. By 1988, the rebel groups agreed to overcome their differences and coordinate their military activities in order to best ensure and hasten the “happy” ending of the long struggle. A little later, the TPLF, believing its vision was radically transformed (from liberating Tigray to governing Ethiopia), endeavored to make itself organizationally capable of handling the new task; to this end, it set out to establish an organization that looked “Ethiopian” instead of ethnocentric. Thus, the TPLF—along with the Ethiopian People Democratic Movement (EPDM), a long-time junior partner of the TPLF that later changed its identity to Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) and administered the Amhara region after 1991—established the EPRDF. The Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO) and Ethiopian Democratic Officers Revolutionary Movement (EDORM) (which became defunct by 1991 and was replaced by the Southern Ethiopian People Democratic Movement [SEPDM]) were then formed. These, mainly consisting of former prisoners of war and Oromo members of the EPDM, were forced to join the new coalition, which was then tightly

controlled by the TPLF. Successive battlefield victories brought the EPRDF close to the capital city through the northern and western flanks of the country. At the same time, the EPLF scored an eventful victory at Afabet in 1988, described by Davidson (in Connel 1993, 228) as “one of the biggest ever scored by any liberation movement anywhere since Dien Bien Phu.” After two years, it captured Massawa and started preparations to take over Asmara, the capital.

In the meantime, the huge successes of these two powers got the serious attention of the international community, most importantly of the new super power. The US’s concern for a smooth transition of power spurred the administration to send Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen to speak to the would-be power holders and the vanishing Ethiopian government. While the EPLF, TPLF, and OLF sent delegations, the tottering Ethiopian government ultimately failed to take part in the “negotiations.” Subsequently, the EPRDF was asked to go ahead and take control of the country’s capital city (Metaferia 2009, 77-80).

The OLF’s inclusion in the talks is of interest here. The EPRDF—and also the EPLF—insisted the OLF be part of the talks (Vaughan 1992, 32). Motivated perhaps by the slight military gains it scored towards the end of the Dergue period, the two forces might have wanted to include the OLF in the impending political system. Despite the invitation, however, the OLF was not given the chance to influence the transition of the country. Dima Noggo, an OLF delegate at the talk, testified that Herman talked to each of the four groups separately before the expected conference. “The next day,” he stated, “EPRDF reportedly entered Addis. So, the London Conference was never materialized.” (interview, ESAT, Sept 2011). It was later discovered that Herman gave the EPRDF the green light to take control of the fate of the country. Undisputed, the TPLF-controlled EPRDF started to make its influence felt in the country, and the OLF followed it only

as a junior partner. Many other opponents of the EPRDF were not allowed, or chose not, to take part in the transitional politics.

5.2 The Transition: Ensuring EPRDF's/TPLF's Hegemony

This section traces the processes the TPLF followed to ensure its official hegemony over the Ethiopian state and to create a new political order in the country. With the marginalization of contending forces and the establishment of an ethnocratic state, the new political system created conditions for political grievances to proliferate in the country. However, as the next section shows, all contending forces were subdued mainly because of their internal problems.

Upon assuming power, the major intention of the new rulers of Ethiopia was to display their commitment to a broad-based government and a liberal democratic socio-political order. To this end, they drafted a democratic transitional charter in collaboration with the OLF, which was ratified in the National Peace and Democracy Conference in 1991. In it were present some 27 organizations, mostly newly created ethnic parties under the auspices of the EPRDF without much popular support or base in order both to give the conference the image of inclusiveness and to inject into Ethiopian politics the institutionalization of ethnicity. Some veteran insurgents, such as the WSLF, were revived with the help of the EPRDF, and others, such as the SALF, transformed themselves into Oromo organizations and got seats in the conference. The EPRDF barred bona fide challengers to its hegemony, with the exception of the OLF, from taking part (Tronvoll 2000, 15) or they refused to join in, “being suspicious of the EPRDF’s intentions” (COEDF member, interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014). Such was the case for instance with the members of the COEDF, a broad-based collation of veteran opposition political parties. Apart from the ratification of the charter, the other major task of the conference was to recognize

Eritrea's right for independent statehood pending a referendum in 1993. The referendum went on as planned, and 99.8% of Eritreans voted for independence. Eritrea, led by the EPLF, formally became a state.

The conference was superseded by the Council of Representatives (CoR), an 87-member legislative organ of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia. Subsequently, local and regional elections were set to run in 1992. In the weeks leading up to the election, an atmosphere of confusion prevailed in the country. Some opposition groups—most notably the OLF, the major contender of the TPLF and the one with most seats in the CoR—boycotted them, complaining of the absence of democratic climate in the country. However, the elections—which, according to all observers, were not competitive—went as planned (see Gudina 2003; 2007). The development of events did not satisfy many groups: the OLF left the TGE, severely damaging the inclusiveness of the transitional order; the EPRDF went on forming new parties from the southern, western and eastern regions of the country and handed over the administration of the kilils to them; and the remaining CoR member opposition parties aired their rejection of the unfolding hegemonic aspirations of the EPRDF and “were particularly worried about the development of what they termed the TPLF/EPRDF puppet parties among the many ethnic groups in the country” (Tronvol 2000, 16). Consequently, a mix of local and diaspora political parties met in Paris and, in a “Peace and Reconciliation Conference,” condemned the EPRDF-led transition for failing to “advance the cause of peace and democracy in Ethiopia.” They also accused the EPRDF “of reverting to old-style tactics reminiscent of the Mengistu era to maintain its hold on power” (Freedom House 1994, 254). Finally, they called for a comprehensive conference to be held in Ethiopia in the shortest time possible (Ibid.). A major outcome of that conference was the expulsion by the EPRDF of the SEDPC—another coalition of many

parties—from the TGE. Some members of the other parties who took part in the conference were also detained for some time as they came back to Ethiopia. The TGE thus essentially became an EPRDF government with very few independent voices in it.

The hegemonic aspirations of the EPRDF that began before the downfall of Mengistu's government finally were fully met with the ratification of the new constitution for the country in 1995. The constitution, drafted by a commission "basically dominated by EPRDF-nominated members" (Tronvol 2000, 17), was ratified by an EPRDF-dominated Constitutional Assembly that was born out of another highly controversial round of elections. The constitution-making process, as one former senior EPRDF official confided, "was less participatory than the one that led to the ratification of the Dergue's constitution in 1987" (interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014). Another observer described the process in more detail: "[It had] little in common with the bargaining, trade-offs, and compromises that usually typify such processes; rather it reflects the weakness of the country's democratic institutions, the political objectives of the governing party, and its position of dominance within a state where serious opposition had been crushed or marginalized" (Young 1998, 195).

At any rate, a TPLF/EPRDF-led Ethiopia emerged *de facto* in 1991 and became an official reality after 1995 as the party consolidated its power with the promulgation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. A Tigrayan-dominated government was established and subsequently governed Ethiopia through a highly centralized party and state structure while at the same time projecting an image of state administration hinging on federalism and decentralization.

As the foregoing discussion illustrates, the TPLF followed two general paths—in sharp contrast to the regime before it—towards establishing a relatively stable political system that it reliably dominates. On the one hand, it peacefully allowed the full realization of the political ambitions of strong political/insurgent organizations, organizations that, if confronted violently, would have had the capacity to fight back, reviving the civil war of the near past. In this sense, the EPLF, like the TPLF, benefited from the power it had amassed throughout the Dergue's period and that had peaked in the early 1990s. The TPLF knew very well that ending the war required the unequivocal acceptance of the will of the Eritrean counterpart, even if it was at the cost of the territorial integrity of the country. By allowing the creation of an independent Eritrean state, therefore, the TPLF once and for all brought to an end the most important aspect of the Ethiopian Civil War. That it was ended in this particular way could very well be attributed to the comparative organizational power of the EPLF, which the TPLF duly recognized and yielded to. The EPLF, the strongest fighting machine among all Ethiopian rebels of the Dergue time, successfully transferred its fighting power—including, primarily, its supreme organizational capacity as a rebel group, and also its enhanced military power—to the post-1991 period. It could at that point safely dictate its wishes over the Eritrean territories.

On the other hand, in order to establish its hegemony over post 1991 Ethiopia, the TPLF also imposed its will—coercively as well as politically—over other insurgent groups and political organizations that were deemed weak and incapable of effectively challenging the maker of the new order in the country. All groupings other than the EPLF come under this category. While I have mentioned some of them above, especially interesting is the case of the OLF and ONLF. As noted elsewhere and below (in the case of the OLF), these two organizations propounded ambitions either similar to or less radical than the EPLF by the time the TPLF took control of

Ethiopia. However, the TPLF was not entirely receptive to all their demands. It first tried to accommodate them in the new *modus operandi*, and then ejected them from the system and used its power to subdue them. It turned out to be successful in its coercive measures against them mainly due to the organizational problems of the insurgents.⁷⁴ While the ruling party's hegemonic aspirations turned out to be successful, they in the meantime also laid the foundations for the persistent political and economic sources of grievance in the country in the years to come. When all is said and done, regime change has brought about little meaningful transformation in the structures of conflict in the country.

In the rest of this chapter, I will focus on the condition of insurgency in Ethiopia in the post-1991 period in light of the persistence of popular grievances in the country. I will argue that problems related to the organizational conditions of insurgent groups to some extent explain the dramatic decline of insurgency in EPRDF's Ethiopia. In the next chapter, I will try to show the effects of international connection and its role in the decline of armed movement since then.

5.3 Low Intensity, Low Durability Insurgencies

5.3.1 OLF after 1992

This section will deal with the processes that led to the outflanking and subjugation of the OLF by the EPRDF. I will start with the OLF's series of grievances towards the TPLF, in this way showing the underlying causes of its rebellion against the TPLF's hegemony. I will then show the organizational problems that plagued the OLF by the time its contender captured state power, and consider how these problems led to the decline of the Oromo insurgency.

⁷⁴More on this shortly below.

Grievances that the OLF members and supporters had against the TPLF pre-date the change in regime in 1991. In fact, their mutual antagonism dates back to the 1970s when they first established contact. This contact was initiated by the EPLF, when the OLF opened an office in Khartoum in 1978 (ex-OLF member, interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014). The OLF and the TPLF each immediately discovered that they had some ideological differences. The OLF, believing that Oromiya was under the colonial rule of the Habesha (“Abyssinians”), declared its struggle for the decolonization or independence of the nation. The TPLF, however, disapproved of this line of thought—both the historical analysis and the vision—and assumed that the OLF was a “narrow nationalist” organization. However, the two organizations “agreed to work together towards the same goal of fighting the Dergue and to allow the people of Oromiya to decide their fate when victory was achieved” (ex-senior OLF member, interview, Addis Ababa Oct 2014). To this end, they stepped up their talks, and in the end a few TPLF fighters were sent to train the OLF fighters (Ibid.).

The relationship continued to deteriorate, however, partly due to differences in military strategy and partly due to ideology. Mutual mistrust was another factor. TPLF leaders (e.g., Siyum, qtd. in Vaughan 1992, 18) stated rather controversially that one issue of contention was that the OLF should leave the border areas of Benishangul and establish a direct relationship with the Oromo of Wollega. As an ex-OLF member explained, the two organizations also had differences in their interpretation of the nature of the USSR, the TPLF calling it social imperialist, and the OLF reluctant to do so (interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014). Finally, the OLF’s suspicions about the sincerity of the TPLF (which the Oromo Front saw as an Abyssinian organization) played some role in the complete breakdown of the two fronts’ relationship and the return of the TPLF trainers to their office (Ibid.).

The history of the relationship following this was one of antagonism, the consequences of which had unfolded by 1990, this time also reflecting the uneven distribution of power between the fronts. The OLF, as mentioned earlier, was in a weaker position for one main reason: its leaders had never been in a position to build a strong organization that could work towards effectively mobilizing and guiding the masses they claimed to represent into an efficient fighting force. I have also discussed the major reasons for this failure: the extremely divided and massive Oromo population and the great difficulty of creating a strong unifying identity or ideology, as well as the inability of the leadership to form a coherent core that could rise above the prevalent societal divisions. Neither of these problems was shared by the TPLF. With a coherent and tight organization and a more or less unified constituency of manageable size, the TPLF grew into a successful fighting machine that eventually managed, along with the EPLF, to bring down a regime with the largest standing army in the whole of Africa.

We have also seen that by the time the TPLF took control of Tigray it had begun to entertain the idea of expanding to, among others, Oromo lands. Although it had the means and resources to do so, it needed a semblance of legitimacy. This led to the idea of establishing an Oromo organization under the control of the TPLF. As the TPLF was trying to implement the idea, the OLF received the message that the TPLF's ambition of exercising power was not limited to its homeland but would definitely include Oromo lands. As a result, according to its most visible leader in the 1990s, the OLF people, who had never held a positive opinion of the TPLF, became even more infuriated:

By 1990 when the TPLF formed its Oromo wing, relations between us had completely broken down, and accusations and counter-accusations had become public. The main issue which could not be resolved was that of the relationship between the two

organizations: who can speak for whom: who is the legitimate spokesperson for whom . . . We in the OLF wanted to pursue a policy of “equal entitlement” for the two organizations to represent their two different national constituencies. But, especially after the formation of the MLLT [Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray], they projected themselves as the only feasible alternative. (Lencoo, qtd. in Vaughan, 19-20)

The post-1991 relationship between the TPLF/ERPDP and the OLF should be understood in these two contexts: uneven power distribution and fundamental disagreements between the fronts. What transpired later was simply a continuation of the deep-rooted hostility and mutual mistrust between two fiercely contending parties with highly divergent power capabilities. The transitional period served as a temporary stepping stone towards the near complete routing of the OLF by its foe, which by then had unprecedentedly enhanced its coercive capacity by assuming state power.

The OLF accepted the call by the ERPDP to join in the Addis Ababa Conference June 1991. Both had their own intentions. The TPLF knew it could not ignore the potential of the OLF and thought it would be beneficial to involve it in the system (Markakis 2011, 282) at least for the time being. Some elements within the OLF on their part wanted to give peace a chance (ex-OLF member, interview, Toronto, June 2014). There were others within the OLF camp who were vehemently opposed to the OLF’s involvement, citing history and the alleged untrustworthiness of the TPLF as evidence of the counter-productiveness of participation in any ERPDP-orchestrated conference (Ibid.). The OLF leadership, however, went ahead with its plan, and not only participated in the conference but also subsequently took an active part in drafting the Transitional Charter in the early 1990s. The main result was the establishment of the Council of Representatives. Out of the 87 seats of the council, the ERPDP took 32 and the OLF 12,

reflective of the “military power and political history of the parties” (Fessha 2010, 180). The divergence in the power of the two organizations was also reflected in the distribution of ministerial portfolios within the newly established cabinet. The EPRDF informed the OLF that five portfolios—president, prime minister, defense minister, foreign minister and minister of Interior—belonged to the EPRDF, and that the OLF could take any of the others (Noggo, ESAT interview, Sept 2011). The OLF hesitated at first, but then took four ministries (education, trade, information and agriculture) left over by the EPRDF—in doing so, joining the transitional government (Ibid.). Thus was established a very short-lived compromise deal that starkly reflected the power imbalance between the two fronts. More importantly, and with hindsight, for the EPRDF, the deal also served as a necessary stepping stone—that of co-opting and taming the OLF—towards the full routing of the Oromo insurgency.

The lull in the conflict could not continue for long. In fact, conditions were deteriorating immediately before the formation of the cabinet. The EPRDF seemed to be actually taking some practical steps towards displacing the OLF in Oromiya. The OLF began to complain about the harassment and killing of its supporters and electoral candidates, and reported that certain of its offices in Oromiya had been closed down before the 1992 regional elections. The showdown reached its peak after the two organizations, under the auspices of the EPLF and some Western governments, agreed to encamp their soldiers before election time. Trusting the mediators (OLF CC, 12 April 1994), the OLF encamped its soldiers in accordance with the agreement. The TPLF, however, freed its own from any restrictions, declaring the soldiers to be the army of the state. When the OLF, sensing fraud, decided to leave the camp, the EPRDF not only took control of many areas that had been under the OLF, but also disarmed and killed many of the OLF fighters (ex-OLF fighter, interview, Toronto, June 2014; Harbeson, 1996, 30; Noggo, ESAT

interview, Sept 2011). The OLF finally dropped out of the election and the Transitional Government itself, and its leaders left the country once again to resume a low-key insurgency. But the front's insurgency continued to diminish and it ceased being a visible force shortly after.

The low durability, low intensity insurgency of the OLF requires explanation. One is related to its external dependence, which I will discuss in the next chapter. But internally as well as externally, the OLF was caught by surprise at a time when it could not get enough of a respite to re-configure its weak organizational set-up.

The previous chapter revealed, among other things, the impacts of the highly divided Oromo social structure and the difficulties this imposed on establishing a coherent organizational structure. In the pre-1991 period, the OLF strove to use Oromo nationalism as an ideology to mobilize and unify the Oromo, but failed to do for socio-structural reasons. It is important to note here that there were actual changes taking place in the Oromo sense of collective identity by the time the Dergue regime was toppled. After 1991, Oromo nationalism came of age, becoming a powerful idea that could motivate the Oromo masses irrespective of their geographic location in the country (Hassen 1998, 77-80). This change could be attributed to the sudden collapse of the central government in the early 1990s and the opportunity it created for the OLF. The group could rise to power as part of the transitional government and disseminate its ideology widely and vigorously— “openly and clandestinely”—aided by the structures of the state (Ibid.1998, 78). It could very well be, moreover, that the accumulated efforts of the OLF since its inception to “teach” the divided Oromo about their “Oromomness” bore some fruit. Whatever the reasons, the OLF was now in a better position to mobilize the masses under the banner of a unifying ideology and re-constitute its organization on the basis of new coherent foundations.

However, it was not given the time to do so. By the time it entered into successive clashes with the TPLF/EPRDF army, the OLF was again a group with questionable leadership cohesion and loose command structure. The Front in the wake of 1990 had not yet coordinated its divisions into one. As seen above, the Front was in the process of re-grouping and unifying the command structure from 1988 onwards. The Wallaga (Western) and the Harar (part of Eastern) forces were under separate structures for a long time, developing different political and military cultures. Even its eastern flanks were not well-coordinated. “Its chief weakness,” as Ofcansky and Berry (1993, 244) argued, “remained its inability to mobilize and coordinate the activities of its eastern wing in Harerge, Bale, Sidamo, and Arsi.” The most prominent OLF figures (including Lencoo Latta) “did not in fact have full control over their army” (Oromo activist and intellectual, online interview, June 2014). Not surprisingly, a divided organization like this could not cultivate a disciplined force that could maintain a sustained struggle for liberation inside the country. After the OLF leaders left the country in 1992, the OLF fighters became easy prey for the EPRDF. Even before it left the country, the Front had already been debilitated, attacked by the TPLF during the encampment of the OLF soldiers. That incident had already sent shockwaves through the OLF structure, leaving it in disarray.

When it entered Addis Ababa in 1991, the OLF had only one advantage on its side—which, due to internal problems, it failed to exploit and deploy to achieve its military goals. Its reception from the Oromo population was very positive. According to my informants (two OLF ex-fighters, interview, Toronto, June 2014; Oromo activist, online interview, Feb 2015), “the OLF did not expect such support and thus was not prepared for the huge influx of Oromo youth—and therefore was unable to make use of the new recruits when they were needed”. In order for an insurgency to achieve its goals, a mass—however committed—requires an organization that has

the full capacity to exercise a reasonable amount of control over it, discipline it, and guide it through the trials and difficulties of a liberation struggle with an appropriate strategy. Due to its organizational problems from the pre-1991 period, the OLF could not make use of the unprecedented opportunity it received after 1991 to effectively mobilize and lead the Oromo masses into a sustainable and vibrant insurgency.

After they withdrew from the Transitional Government, the OLF leaders, thrown into a state of confusion, were dispersed outside the country. Apart from few small-scale and isolated attacks (infiltrating through Kenya and Sudan—both of which tightened control over the Front after late 1990s. ICG, 2009, 32), the OLF was a spent force after 1992. With a weak organizational set-up, the OLF tried to launch low-key attacks across the borders, but were successfully repulsed and contained by the EPRDF. Some of the leaders decided to re-group and re-constitute the organization, looking for a sanctuary in a neighboring country to settle and establish a base from which to re-launch the insurgency. By the end of the 1990s, their persistent search had finally led them to Eritrea, which opened its arms to all opposition to the EPRDF rule in Ethiopia. The OLF has since been based in that neighboring country, whose contentious relationship with the Ethiopian opposition will be examined in detail in the next chapter.⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ In the meantime, the grim setback the OLF encountered in the early 1990s intensified the internal divisions among the leadership and then by the end of the century, led to fragmentation. Fragmentation occurred at different stages. The first occurred in 2001, when an Eritrean-based OLF faction led by Dawud Ibsa unseated the then secretary general, Galaasa Dildo, and gave his place to Ibsa. Galaasa subsequently formed his own group, the OLF Transitional. In 2006, Dawud's group received with jubilation a brigadier general in the Ethiopian army, Kemal Gelchu, who had defected to the OLF in Eritrea along with some 150 soldiers (Sudan Tribune, Aug 2006). He was given the post of commanding the OLA, the military wing of the OLF. A little later, Kemal Gelchu had a radical shift of mind and split from the Dawud-led OLF in 2008. The new splinter group, adopting the name OLF-Change, hugely impaired the military potency of the Dawud faction by taking away two-thirds of the existing 3000 OLF army in Eritrea (interview, ex-OLF fighter and active member of one of the OLF factions, Toronto, June 2014). In the meantime, on November 21, 2012, Galaasa's and Dawud's factions retracted their diatribe and agreed "to reunite our forces, combine our resources and restore a strong OLF in order to meet the serious challenges that are facing the Oromo

5.3.2 The EPPF

With the demise of the Dergue's regime, a heightened anti-TPLF activism set in among the proponents of the Ethiopian nationalist rhetoric, most of whom belonged to the Amhara ethnicity. They saw in the TPLF and its ethnic-friendly discourses the seeds of the destruction of the "cherished motherland." When Eritrea's secession became a reality—a secession for whose peaceful character the TPLF was held responsible—the opposition reached its peak and has continued ever since. Different groups have been organized around the Amhara or Ethiopian nationalist narratives to resist EPRDF's hegemony over the state and to help restore the "lost glory" of Ethiopianness. One of the most well-known armed groups espousing such rhetoric was the Ethiopian People Patriotic Front (EPPF).

The history of the EPPF can be traced back to the mid-1980s when a small band of people took arms against the TPLF as it tried to expand southwards. They especially fought the latter in Gondar, proving to the Front the difficulty of taking control of that region. Such a disorganized anti-TPLF movement had to wait until the early 1990s to take a formal shape. A year after the change of government in Ethiopia, these elements established the Ethiopian People Patriotic Movement, and were soon joined by students from the Addis Ababa University and former

nation, and to struggle for its survival and independence" (OLF, Nov 2012). At the same time, however, two other fragmentations were underway. Lenccoo Lata, a veteran OLF leader, along with some other OLF old guards, declared in 2012 the formation of Oromo Democratic Front (Forum). This group does not have an armed wing. In fact, it showed some interest in challenging the EPRDF legally inside the country although its leader was sent back abroad immediately after his arrival in Addis Ababa in March 2015 (Finfinne Tribue, March 2015). Most recently, there were reports of major disagreements within the leadership core of Kemal Gelchu's OLF. The disagreements led to a thoroughly confusing wave of self-declared expulsions/demotions of one senior member by another. The reasons cited for all the above waves of factionalism and fragmentations range from disgruntlement resulting from failure to deliver to religious and regional tensions. They all point to the complete absence of any semblance of organizational coherence within the leadership of the Oromo insurgency, which has in turn negatively affected the centralization of insurgent activities and the disciplining of recruits for some radical political end.

members of the Ethiopian national army. The EPRDF soon launched an attack on these elements, driving them out of the country. The organization re-grouped in Sudan, infiltrated Ethiopia, and re-started intermittent small-scale attacks in the country. When the Eritrean-Ethiopian war ignited in 1998, Ethiopia immediately normalized its relations with Sudan, creating unfavorable conditions for the EPPF. The Front then switched its base to Eritrea and has remained there ever since. A series of unifications with like-minded organizations took place subsequently, the major one being in 2001 in the forming of the EPPF (EPPF 2005, 5-10). It was first led by Col Tadesse Muluneh, followed by Meskerem Atalay, and finally Me'azaw Getu.

The EPPF claims to be a multinational force, although it is (since 2005 at least) almost entirely constituted by people coming from the Amhara ethnic group (See Prunier 2008, 14), with the stated aim of establishing a supra-ethnic democratic political system in the country that is firmly anchored in Ethiopian nationalism. The discourse of supra-ethnicity, the regional affiliation of most of its leaders and fighters, and its spokespersons' emphasis on Ethiopian nationalism gave the organization a rightist political leaning. It was actually seen by the ethnonationalist camp as an ultra-conservative Amhara group. It self-reportedly aspires to build a political system "that is based on national reconciliation", and purportedly works with groups that take this as their goal too. In order to achieve these objectives, however, it believes that "the TPLF hegemony has to be shattered"—reduced to just one party that could take part in negotiations to form a government based on national reconciliation. The EPPF thus considers armed struggle to be a necessary tool for achieving this immediate objective (online/phone interview with two (ex) EPPF leaders, June 2014).

The EPPF has repeatedly claimed to have killed some members of the Ethiopian army and destroyed some state property, although no independent source has yet verified these claims. It is

very likely that most of these claims are overstated. According to an ex-senior member of the EPPF, there was much exaggeration in the report on the outcomes of otherwise low-key skirmishes between the rebels and the regime forces (online interview, June 2014). According to another (phone interview, June 2014), “90% of the reports are false”. It is plausible that over the course of 22 years, the organization, in its incursions into Ethiopian territory, has inflicted slight damage to government military equipment perhaps even killed a few soldiers. However, as an ex-member of one insurgent group told me (online interview, June 2014), most of their operations ended in merely pilfering cattle from peasants.⁷⁶ The inefficacy of the organization has thus been widely acknowledged by both supporters and detractors. The front’s failure to deliver has also been a source of great disgruntlement among its ex-members. Many have loudly complained about the problems that have “crippled” the group and made it impotent. Certain useful documents issued by the Front itself help to clarify these crippling problems. Sober assessments, based on frontline research and personal experiences of ex-members, point to two major problems: internal and external. While I will reserve discussion of the external problems for the next chapter, I here focus on the internal ones.⁷⁷

The EPPF has been beset with multiple problems, the main ones being organizational in nature.

Leadership incoherence and the resultant lack of centralization in the rebel organization have had

⁷⁶ An insider informed me that when members of the Ethiopian army or police were killed or army equipment was put out of use by a few individuals without any particular organization or even by bandits roaming in the northern highlands, the EPPF reports these as its own achievements.

⁷⁷ This internal vs. external categorization of factors responsible for the ineffectiveness of the EPPF in particular and most of present-day insurgents in general is somewhat misleading for one central reason. As we will see in the next chapter, the internal problems of the insurgents are inextricably linked to the external environment, i.e., Eritrean interference. In this section, by “internal” I mean the internal sources of organizational crisis, since the latter also has a great deal to do with foreign involvement. In this and the next chapters, I will emphasize leadership problems and to some extent problems with centralization as major aspects of organizational incapacity. More discussion on centralization and internal discipline is to come in the next chapter in connection with external involvement.

serious repercussions on the insurgency waged by the front. As two senior ex-members (phone and online interviews, June 2014) explain, there was deep disagreement and power struggle among members of the leadership from the beginning. The EPRF has never had a unified leadership running its affairs from the top. The antagonism among its leaders has in turn negatively affected its command structure, as it has never had a hierarchically ordered structure that is firmly and fully controlled by a single leader or group of leaders. The divided leaders have had their own power and admirers within the structure. Moreover, the EPPF has been weakened by the lack of clear organizational structure or division of labour. According to an EPPF report (2007), because there is no specific person assigned for each task the Front engages in, confusion ensues when errands come up. With regard to logistics and finance, for example, it was at times not clear to whom funds should be sent; and when funds were sent to the battlefield, the experts heard complaints that nothing reached the army on the ground—a confusion stemming from disagreement among the leaders. Some of the EPPF’s senior diaspora representatives lamented the overall loose organizational structure of the Front (interview of Keski and Demis on Paltalk, Feb 2010).

Another critical organizational problem the EPPF faced was internal fracture. In 2005, for example, a number of non-Amhara members abandoned the Front to join organizations that represented their respective ethnic groups. The question of who initiated this is very controversial, with some accusing a top CC member and others attributing it to the Eritrean government (phone and online interview with two ex-EPPF members, June 2014). At any rate, this series of ethnic-based splits in the organization had significant adverse effects on the vitality of the Front in the years to come. According to one source, all of a sudden, as a result of this

“ethnic-based flight,” the EPPF fighting force was reduced from 5000 to few hundred (ex- CC member of EPPF, phone interview, June 2014).

One factor⁷⁸ behind the organizational crisis of the EPPF is related to decisions of the elite, who did not take existing opportunities to rise above tribal/regional divisions and capitalize on the collective sense of identity the Front was supposedly built on. In examining of the origins of strong/weak organizations thus far in this dissertation, a critical factor affecting organizational set-up among rebel groups is not only the condition of collective identity or the homogeneity/heterogeneity of the society among whom it operates, but also the elites’ choices in terms of effectively using that collective identity for specific goals. The EPPF straddles two overlapping identities, at least one of which could potentially serve as a foundation for constituting an ideology that gives the organization coherence and clarity of vision. EPPF elites have duly recognized the importance of one of these collective identities and emphasized it, as already seen, in their rhetoric, but have not successfully surpassed sectarian divisions.

As the homeland of all of its leaders and top fighters, the Amhara ethnic identity was one option that the EPPF fighters could have rallied behind and taken inspiration from. However, EPPF leaders made a conscious decision to distance themselves from it—for two possible reasons. First, it is an incipient form of national/ethnic identity without strong foundations, in historical or cultural terms. The Amhara ethnic identity, as the bulk of the literature on the subject matter illustrates, has long been subsumed under the wider Ethiopian nationalism, and it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Whether or not an Amhara identity exists separate from Ethiopian

⁷⁸I should hasten to note here that the making of intra-elite division makes full sense only when seen in conjunction with the Eritrean involvement that we will see in the next chapter, and which helped escalate whatever division the EPPF leadership has suffered from and made its resolution very difficult.

nationalism has been a long-standing debate among Ethiopian academics and politicians in general and Amhara elites in particular, some of whom have strongly denied the existence of such a consciousness (see Michael 2008, 395). Rather than using the general rubric of Amhara, as the argument goes, people who have lived in today's Amhara region usually prefer to refer to themselves using intra-Amhara regional identities, such as Gojjame, Gondere, Wolloye, and Menze. Despite this, the EPPF leaders could have made some serious efforts to bring up and solidify such a consciousness (along the lines of Amahara nationalism), however inchoate, if they wanted to.

Any efforts in that direction, however, were obviated by the second reason EPPF leaders decided to distance themselves from the Amhara identity. The EPPF leaders loathed the very discourse of ethnic politics, seeing it as destructive device the EPRDF imposed on the peoples of Ethiopia. As people coming from a region that has remained a bastion of anti-ethnic political rhetoric, the EPPF elites have always wanted to distance themselves from such politics, accusing the ruling party of institutionalizing it within the Ethiopian state structure—playing divide and rule tactics in order to prolong its own rule. The need to distance themselves from EPRDF-like politics negated any possibility they would consider adopting Amhara-based nationalism as a unifying ideology.

Hence, they made a determined move towards another collective identity, more akin to their own ideological background. Ethiopian nationalism has always been a strong discourse in the northern (specifically Amhara) regions of Ethiopia and has long roots in Ethiopian politics. After all, the cumulative effects of multi-faceted efforts by successive modern kings and emperors of the country had given rise to a powerful nationalist discourse long before the coming to power of the EPRDF. The EPPF's effort to base itself on such rhetoric, although disadvantageous in one

sense, could be an immense asset for strengthening the potential of the front. The disadvantage lay in the fact that members of the EPPF who belonged to the previously subjugated ethnic groups of the country would not view the right-wing ideology of Ethiopian nationalism favorably, which would contribute to the ethnic fracture within the organization referred to above. But even if non-Amhara members fled, the EPPF could continue to consolidate the organization—now firmly Amhara-staffed—on the basis of that ideology. The promotion of Ethiopian nationalism would make the rebel group one of the few long-standing armed refuges for all Ethiopians unhappy with identity politics, most of whom hail from the Amhara region of the country.

Although keen to use this collective identity as a guiding ideology, however, the EPPF leaders (or many elements in the leadership) could not successfully rise above sub-regional divisions within the Amhara ethnic group. Intra-Amhara divisions began to surface within the leadership early on, and continued to do so repeatedly, making it difficult for the front's class of elites to solidify as a compact whole. Even though almost all of the leaders have come from the Amhara ethnic group, regional competition and mistrust among them was intense, and personal power struggles played out along tribal lines. As two ex-EPPF members maintained (online interviews, June 2014 and Feb 2015), towards the beginning, a major fault line was between those from Wolqait⁷⁹ who were in scores⁸⁰ and those hailing from other parts of Amhara.⁸¹ Although this regional dichotomy was not quite as sharp—as a few non-Wolqaites⁸² sided with Meskerem in the struggle for power—it was still prevalent. This sense of Wolqait consciousness has been

⁷⁹A disputed region in Gondar, Amhara, which is now under the territorial jurisdiction of the Tigray Region.

⁸⁰ Informally led by the then chief of finance, Meskerem Atalay

⁸¹Led by the first chair, Col. Tadesse Muluneh.

⁸² Dr Muse, a Gojjame CC member, could be an example.

consistently strong among the leaders who hail from that region. A similar regional antagonism and power struggle was also evident among the international representatives of the EPPF—some of whom have had critical influence inside it—and persisted well into early 2010s, both before and after the EPPF’s second general assembly. According to some sources, the dominance of Gonderes in the place of leadership both inside and outside Eritrea was a source of concern for some other Amharas, some of whom are widely credited with investing much energy and time to reform the organization. It is thus ironic that a group that detested adhering to an ethnic (Amhara) category—believing that it was too parochial—never stopped experimenting with sub-ethnic, even more parochial, forms of identity. At the same time, one could argue that it was precisely because the broader Amhara factor was not favored and emphasized as a unifying ideology that intra-Amhara divisions finally resurged.

At any rate, the regional antagonism was further complicated by the huge difference in the social background of the leaders. Not only did they never share any institutional base prior to joining the front, they were also rooted in very different social settings. Some were more educated (non-Wolqaites) than others (Wolqaites). At least one of the top leaders from Wolqait was entirely illiterate. Some had backgrounds in the military and had reached top positions in the military echelons of the former regime, while others had peasant/rural backgrounds.⁸³

The conflict among the leaders escalated with the imprisonment of Meskerem, by the orders of the Eritrean officials.⁸⁴ This led to commotion between some senior members and Col Tadesse, the first chair of the Front. After his release, Meskerem replaced Tadesse, and remained in that

⁸³The antagonism within the leadership was again further fueled due to Eritrean involvement. See next chapter.

⁸⁴ See next chapter for more on this.

position until his desertion of the field in 2005.⁸⁵ He had a few followers in the army, with the result that conflict ensued between his supporters and detractors. When central leaders are weak and divided, others join the furor and escalate the internal division, making it very difficult for any single leader to establish any meaningful centralized organization with a tight chain of command.

As part of enforcement mechanisms, a series of military trainings were offered to the fighters, most notably early on under the guidance of Tadesse, a person of high military caliber and acumen. Punishment mechanisms were also put in place with the intention of restoring order and discipline within the front. However, none of these could effectively resolve the problems. Part of the reason was that the organization was ailing from top-level internal divisions, making a concerted leadership effort at cleaning house very difficult.⁸⁶

Apart from the above reasons—elite choice and lack of shared institutional belonging—another, perhaps unique, agential factor compounded the front's predicament: that is, lack of dedication to the cause on the part of some of its leaders. At least one of the top leaders of the EPPF has consistently been accused of not displaying the required dedication to the cause of establishing a strong Front against the enemy. EPPF researchers demonstrated this problem in the document they produced in 2007. One manifestation of this lack of dedication, as the document states, is

⁸⁵ According to a detailed 2007 report prepared by a team of diaspora-based Front-affiliated experts that assesses the internal problems of the EPPF, and as confirmed through (phone) interview (ex-EPPF member, June 2014), Secretary General Meskerem Atalay has abandoned Eritrea and started to live in Germany since 2005. He claimed to be organizing and leading a new army to fight the Ethiopian regime, a claim that is widely taken as untrue.

⁸⁶But that is not the end of the story. There could have been some possibility for more effective punishment mechanisms and the emergence of strong leaders such as Tadesse through outflanking their contenders and consolidating their power over the entire organization. It was arguably Eritrea's intervention that complicated such possibilities, or made them entirely impossible. We will see this in detail in the next chapter.

when key leaders have abandoned the field—apparently in favor of a “normal” life elsewhere in the diaspora.⁸⁷ As a result, fighters on the ground have been left practically leaderless for years, which no doubt had a direct bearing on the ineffectiveness of their armed struggle. Another example revealing the lack of dedication on the part of the leadership was their reluctance to regularly familiarize themselves with the wider political environment in which their insurgency was located. According to ex-EPPF CC member Demis Belete, the EPPF leaders are “not familiar, and not really willing to familiarize themselves, with the Ethiopian reality and the conditions of international politics” (Keskis and Demis, interview, Paltalk, Feb 2010) This might deprive the leadership not only of the opportunities to develop sophisticated ideological tools to serve as bases for mobilization, but also of the necessary and up-to-date skills and knowledge to implement policies. Furthermore, such a leadership core might face a crisis of legitimacy as a result of the low caliber of education. It was partly due to cognizance of these problems that the above-mentioned members of the Ethiopian diaspora were made part of the CC. The international team was headed by a university professor, reflective in part of the felt need for educated members. After sharp disagreements between the new contestants within the Front against the 17-strong international committee and the professor, the latter resigned and the tug of war erupted shortly after.

In a new effort to revamp the leadership of the organization, a general assembly was held in 2010, after some controversial CC members/leaders left Eritrea and the EPPF. Among the many

⁸⁷ The most important example here could be the secretary general of the EPPF, who left Eritrea to live in Germany since 2005, claiming to be organizing and leading a new army to fight the Ethiopian regime. No one has found any evidence to prove this claim. The EPPF members nevertheless continued for some years to assume that he was still the leader and did not elect a replacement. Experts who conducted a study on the EPPF wondered why a person who led the EPPF army with a “remote control” should still be considered the commander of the army in Eritrea and was not removed, and suggest that he was surrounded by people who were either related to him or had vested interest in the eclipse of the EPPF.

resolutions it passed, it was agreed that a team of 17 members of the diasporic community would be drafted into the CC. Among other things, these members would be in charge of the front's tasks in the diaspora. However, a few days later, and in contravention of the resolution of the general assembly, a number of other individuals announced themselves to be the true representatives of the Front in the diaspora. According to many sources, they had travelled to Eritrea immediately before the announcement and established intimate contacts with EPPF members in Eritrea, through whom they began influencing sensitive decisions made in the Front. Subsequently, the Front passed through a long and tumultuous period of accusation and counter-accusation over power and corruption involving the wider Ethiopian community in the diaspora and negatively affecting its operational tasks on the ground. Some of the most dedicated members of the diaspora team left the EPPF entirely amidst the confusion. Hence, the attempt at refurbishing the organization by giving it a diasporic touch has not been successful; and in many ways, it was a liability (See the resolution by the different chapters of EPPF in the Diaspora and central committee members: External Representatives of the EPPF Leadership, 2010; and a report by Melke Mengiste, a member of the 17 CC members, 2010). The Front has since gone through a number of formal changes, such as change of leadership and amalgamation with another rebel group, the G7. But it is not clear to what extent it has managed to transform its organizational structure.

Chapter 6

Foreign Support, Foreign Leverage and Organizational Capacity: Ethiopian Insurgents, 1974–2014

In this chapter, I will look at the role of foreign support (i.e., from foreign states to rebel groups), foreign leverage (i.e., the degree of control those states have over the rebel groups), and foreign state interest/orientation (i.e., towards the state that the rebels fight) in explaining the divergences in the level of insurgency in post-1974 Ethiopia. In order to clearly extract the importance (or otherwise) of these factors, I will try to assess the extent to which foreign support could explain the divergences in the level of insurgencies both during the Dergue's and EPRDF's era. Foreign support has already been given much emphasis in the literature especially as it pertains to boosting the fighting power of insurgents. In the following lines, I will try to show that foreign support for rebels usually explains the level of insurgency only to a limited extent, and is very much dependent on the two other interrelated factors: foreign state leverage and foreign state interest. I will argue, from the side of rebels, first, that foreign support becomes crucial in the initial stages of the growth of rebel movements and the short-term (at best medium-term) intensification of their activities. It does not necessarily help much to understand their strength/durability in the long run, which is primarily a function of their organizational capacity. Second, when it works, foreign support is dependent on the amount of leverage a foreign state has over the insurgents it supports and the strategic interests it has towards the country that is targeted by the insurgents. When leverage is high and the foreign state chooses to promote aggressive policies towards the other state, insurgency tends to intensify. When, on the other hand, leverage is high and the foreign state opts for a more conservative (non-violent) foreign

policy towards the other state—this being a direct consequence of regime/state crisis resulting from defeat in war with the insurgent-targeted state—insurgency tends to almost die out.⁸⁸ When leverage is low, foreign support has the same effect as high leverage and aggressive state policy: it helps to intensify insurgency. I will use the different cases of variations in the level of insurgency since 1974 to demonstrate the value of these arguments.

Foreign support for regimes, on the other hand, has been constant during both the Dergue's and the EPRDF's era. Both regimes have been well supported by several foreign powers, and hence foreign support for regimes cannot explain variations in the level of insurgency across cases. It can then be considered as a control variable.

I will start the discussion with support for successive regimes since 1974. I will then move on to foreign support for rebels and also the impacts of foreign leverage and foreign interest on the scale of insurgency in the given period.

6.1 Foreign Support for Regimes, 1974–2014

6.1.1 Foreign Support for the Dergue

An otherwise poor country in the African continent, Ethiopia's strategic geopolitical position has attracted the attention of many international powers over the centuries. The Horn of Africa, in which Ethiopia has for long been the most dominant political actor,

⁸⁸ As shown in the theoretical chapter, an inference one could make from this argument is that foreign support for rebels should not be confused with foreign interest to destabilize other regimes. A foreign country that supports rebels of another, as I will show below in the case of Eritrea, may or may not have actual interest in challenging the status quo in that other country. Support does not necessarily illustrate interest to destabilize.

has always been allotted a relatively important strategic value owing to its proximity to the Red Sea which is an important and expeditious route of international trade and communications between Europe, the Middle East and the Far East as well as the navigation route through which oil is transported from the Persian Gulf (in which the largest oil deposits of the world are located) to consumers in North America and Europe (Mesfin 2011, 19)

Strategic considerations have pushed such countries as Portugal, Italy, France, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union to show key interest in working with Ethiopia at the height of their powers in the international system (Tekle 1989, 481). Successive Ethiopian rulers, on their part, have skillfully exploited their vital location to promote their national and regime interests by forging alliances with these powers and at times pitting one against the other.

The Dergue was one such regime. It asserted its agency time and again in choosing allies and enticing them to stand by its side. It refused to yield to the demands of any power that required the discarding of its ideological and political orientations and dispensations. Once chosen, alliances were carefully maintained in ways that do not intractably influence the course of events inside the country, but only to the extent that the support that comes from them is effectively put to use in the cause of the regime's political and strategic goals. Most important of these goals was the suppressing of rebel movements proliferating all over the country. In helping meet this objective of the regime, eastern European states, Cuba, Israel, and most notably the USSR have played large roles. The effectiveness of this internationally backed campaign at "clearing" the homeland from insurgents, however, was mixed. It worked in the southeast, but failed to achieve favorable results in the north. Hence, this variation in the outcome of the wars points to the

primary importance of factors other than the state's coercive capacity to explain insurgency levels.

Below, I will briefly consider the relations the Dergue regime established with selected countries of the world and the assistance it received from them in its bid to exterminate its opponents.

6.1.1.1 Relations with the US

The socialist Dergue's capture of state power did not automatically lead to a rupture of Ethiopia's relation with the US. A strong ally of Haile Sellasie's regime, the US continued to provide the new rulers with arms sale and military aid until 1977. There were three reasons for this (Halliday and Molyneux 1982, 220). First, the US did not want to see parts of the Red Sea controlled by the Arab states and menace Israel's interest in the region. Thus, they saw it fit to continue helping Ethiopia in its fight against the Arab-supported cause of Eritrean independence. Second, the US, by letting the Eritrean independence take place, also did not want to create a precedent that would disturb the principle of the permanence of borders on the African continent. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, since Somalia was backed by the USSR, Cold War logic of counter-balancing dictated that the US should support Ethiopia. Hence, despite its censure of the bleak human rights record of the Dergue during the latter's initial stages of rule, the US did not fail to extend much-needed support to the (yet) ideologically undefined regime in Ethiopia.

This changed dramatically and quickly. The new Carter administration, emphasizing the deteriorating human rights condition in the country, announced in February 1977 the banning of arms aid to Ethiopia (Halliday and Molyneux 1982). The administration had also announced earlier its willingness to support Somalis with military aid as the latter started to show interest in establishing relations with the West. The military government's response was determined: it

declared the closure of the US Information Agency, Military Advisory Group, National Medical Research Center, and Kagnew Station (Metaferia 2009, 64). The US also responded by announcing the suspension of all arms supplies (including arms sales) to the Dergue. The Dergue finally demanded that Western news agencies such as Reuters, Agence France Press, and the *Washington Post* leave the country within 48 hours. US-Ethiopia relations came to an end, except for humanitarian assistance during the 1984 famine and some trade relations. Until the end drew close, however, US military assistance to Ethiopia had been considerable, and in some ways actually exceeded the assistance given to Ethiopia during the later days of the emperor (Halliday and Molyneux 1982).

6. 1.1.2 Relations with the USSR

The single most reliable external source of military support for Dergue's Ethiopia was the USSR. The latter threw its weight devotedly and publicly behind the Dergue in 1977, although the junta's connection with the USSR dates back to the early phase of the revolution. After Mengistu had his comrades-in-leadership executed and emerged as the sole de facto leader of the state, he received messages of congratulations from the USSR and Cuban ambassadors (Clapham 1989, 225). Clearly, the president welcomed the good gesture, and needed, especially given the deteriorating relationship with the US, to take the connection of his country with the USSR to a new level. The USSR took some time to calculate the benefits of formally allying itself with the Dergue, especially in light of its connections with the Dergue's emerging enemy, Somalia's Siad Barre. Finally, with the downturn of USSR's alliance with Somalia for several reasons and the persistent knocking on Soviet doors by Ethiopia, the other superpower finally aligned its interests with that of Ethiopia. This paved the way for a full-fledged and unprecedentedly strong

cooperation between Ethiopia and the leader of the Communist bloc that was to endure until at least the mid-1980s.

Treaties between the two countries and a steady supply of military assistance to Ethiopia followed. As part of their aid agreement in May 1977, the USSR promised to deliver weapons to Ethiopia. The Soviets began to supply tanks, rocket launchers, and combat aircraft in late September. The assistance grew exponentially both in kind and quantity over the next few months. “The total value of the weapons shipped [by the USSR] within a few months reached \$1 billion” (Ayele 2014, 44), surpassing “the total value of the US aid provided to Ethiopia between 1953 and 1977” (Patman 1990, 223). Soviet Russia stood firmly by the side of the Dergue during its difficult times, and was indispensable in helping it to win its battles with all of its enemies, with the exception of the northern insurgents. Its role in the defeat of the invading Somali army was especially a great service to the military junta. Although it did not work out as expected, the USSR extended help generously in terms of planning, command, and the provision of hardware on the eve of the Dergue’s major military engagements with the EPLF, including the Red Star Operation (1982) and the Bahra Nagash Operation (1984). By 1984, the military assistance provided to the Dergue reached 4 billion US dollars. The USSR also took it upon itself to train, in its own country, more than a thousand Ethiopian military personnel.

The strong commitment of Soviet Russia to help out its needy ally in the Horn started to taper off after a new administration took over, led by Gorbachev. The structural changes the administration initiated in the country at the level of politics and economics are well treated in other works and hence will not be mentioned here. Ethiopia was one of the countries seriously affected by these changes. As part of his policy to reconcentrate the overstretched Soviet energy to the home front, Gorbachev pushed for a negotiated peaceful solution to the problem of

insurgency in Ethiopia. This policy had a practical manifestation as well: the USSR immediately cut back its arms deliveries to Ethiopia and the number of its advisers on the ground. It also rejected Mengistu's relentless efforts to get the flow of support to its "normal" levels. The arms delivery continued to dwindle significantly until it stopped entirely in the last days of the Dergue. The reduction in the supply of arms was definitely a great blow to the embattled regime, which was made more vulnerable to the advancing northern rebel army. However, one should not assume that the USSR's decision caused the defeat of the Ethiopian army. The northern insurgents had already showed remarkable resilience in the face of, and had even gained some clear victory in the field over, the super-power-backed Ethiopian National Army in the pre-1985 period. The most probable effect of continuing the supply of arms at the "normal" scale would have been an even bloodier civil war that would have, nonetheless, failed to stem the tide in the military's favor.

6.1.1.3 Relations with other Communist Countries and Israel

Other members of the Communist bloc also followed the example set out by the USSR in arming, training, and advising the Ethiopian military. The supply of arms came from countries as diverse as Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, North Korea, Poland, and Yugoslavia (Ayele 2014). Various kinds of military equipment were provided by these countries to the Dergue at different times, some in the form of grants, others for cash or credit. Between 1974 and 1991, as Ayele (Ibid, 44–45) notes, "the Ethiopian government received US \$ 9, 420, 328, 651 worth of military equipment from all Communist states." The role played by Cuba is notable among all communist states outside the USSR itself. It began to shift its alliance from Somalia to Ethiopia subsequent to Somalia's rejection of the plan to establish a confederation, mentioned above. Cuba's aid to the Ethiopian regime in its

wars in the east was formidable. By dispatching a staggering 17,000 of its troops to fight alongside the Ethiopian army in the Ogaden war, it played a prominent role in sustaining the regime against its eastern antagonists. As Clapham (1989, 235) maintains, “Cuba played the spearhead role in the victory over the Somalis in March 1978, and the name of the battle field at Karamara remains an oft-invoked symbol of Ethio-Cuban solidarity.” On the northern front as well, Cuba’s presence was (at least indirectly) felt. The “Cubans helped to provide back-up facilities,” and their prolonged stay in the east after the Ogaden War to secure the region also enabled the Dergue to transfer its troops to Eritrea (Ibid., 236). It was only in 1989, after the Ethio-Somali peace treaty of 1988, that the last Cuban contingent left Ethiopia.

The Dergue also received a good deal of support from Israel. Israel’s relationship with Ethiopia has for the most part been warm for many reasons, most importantly their shared siege mentality, as the two countries perceive themselves to be non-Muslim/non-Arab countries surrounded by Muslim-majority states (Erlich 1994). Israel was especially wary of Eritrean movements: having believed that the Eritrean struggle was a Muslim-dominated, Arab-supported movement, it wanted to extinguish it before it grew hostile to it and “enforce[d] a blockade of the Bab el Mandab straits at the southern end of the Red Sea” (Ibid., 96). Israel thus offered a great deal of support to the Dergue (as well as to its predecessor). Israeli technicians serviced “jets supplied by the US. Arms, including anti-personnel cluster bombs” at least until 1978 (Ibid.). “Israel also trained Ethiopians to operate the tanks they had captured from the Somali army” during the Ogaden War (Ibid., 102). After a brief cooling of the relationship, as a result of Mengistu’s need to maintain close contact with radical Arab states, Israel again resumed, under the request of the Dergue, providing weapons and high-level intelligence service after 1983/84. That was a time

when the Dergue's stamina was seriously challenged in northern lands. Israel committed itself to smothering the Dergue's enemies by generously providing aid in every respect:

[I]n 1984, Israeli advisers trained the Presidential Guard and Israeli technical personnel served with the police . . . In 1985, Tel Aviv reportedly sold Addis Ababa at least US\$20 million in Soviet-made munitions and spare parts captured from Palestinians in Lebanon. According to the EPLF, the Mengistu regime received US\$83 million worth of Israeli military aid in 1987, and Israel deployed some 300 military advisers to Ethiopia. Additionally, . . . thirty-eight Ethiopian pilots had gone to Israel for training . . . [In 1990] Tel Aviv furnished an array of military assistance to Addis Ababa, including 150,000 rifles, cluster bombs, ten to twenty military advisers to train Mengistu's Presidential Guard, and an unknown number of instructors to work with Ethiopian commando units. Unconfirmed reports also suggested that Israel had provided the Ethiopian air force with surveillance cameras and had agreed to train Ethiopian pilots (Ofcansky 1993, 300-301).

Israel's heightened commitment to supporting the Dergue until the end can be partly explained, according to some observers, by the latter's tacit cooperation during Operation Moses, in which thousands of Ethiopian Jews were flown to Israel. Cash and military assistance of all sorts were provided, among other strategic reasons (which we saw earlier), for Mengistu's agreement to fulfill the return of Beta Israel to the Promised Land in three batches. The outcome for Israel of its support for the military regime was neither fully satisfying (it could not save it from falling) nor totally bad (it got the Ethiopian Jews "back" to the Land). For Mengistu's regime, however, the unfortunate result was inevitable. The net outcome of international support, thus, was a more violent war.

6.1.2 Support for the EPRDF: The West and EPRDF

With the fall of the military junta in sight, the US showed renewed interest in the Horn country. As seen in the previous chapter, the US became heavily involved in the process of power transition in the early 1990s through its Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Herman Cohen. It also generally endorsed, with a few reservations, subsequent developments in Ethiopia under the TPLF, including the controversial elections of 1992 and the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1995. US concern was mainly focused on the problematic democratic situation in the country, especially the disputed elections. The US, however, had another important reason to deepen its relations with Ethiopia: the Clinton Administration's concern about the rising influence of Islamist politics in the region, especially in the Sudan (Metaferia 2009, 91). In addition, the semblance of democratic process and the move towards a market economy added to the US interest, or at least provided good justification for intensifying bilateral relations. The friendship between the two countries grew steadily after 1995 and the significance of Ethiopia reached an even higher level in the post-9/11 period, when it was seen as the most important ally of the US in the fight against terrorism in the Horn of Africa. In short, except for two cases of a short-lived lull in the relationship between the two countries—during the Ethio-Eritrean War of 1998–2000 and during the massive crackdown on opposition supporters after the 2005 election—the US has been the most important ally of Ethiopia in both diplomatic and financial terms.

The US support for the regime has been steady, providing \$1 billion annually between 2008 and 2010. The amount it provided in 2011, \$608 million, was nearly three times that given by the UK, another notable donor (Oakland Institute 2013, 4). The US is the largest bilateral donor to Ethiopia (Hackenesch 2011, 14). Military aid has also been provided at times, a notable example

being after Ethiopia invaded Islamist-dominated Somalia in 2006. Apart from the \$1.5million dollars that G. Bush requested as military assistance for Ethiopia for the year 2008, about 100 US weapons and military advisors were also sent to Ethiopia in less than a month after Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia (Bamfo 2009, 61).

European countries have followed in the footsteps of the US in normalizing their relations with Ethiopia. In line with the perceived democratic opening and economic liberalization in the country since the early 1990s, Europeans established bilateral and multilateral relations with the Horn country and provided it with much financial aid. According to Hackenesch (2011, 14), "Ethiopia is the largest recipient of European aid in Africa and is also worldwide among the largest recipients of European aid. For Ethiopia, the EU . . . has been the largest traditional donor in 2009, providing about 40 percent of total aid or about € 1 billion" (Ibid.). Just like the US, Europe's attention has been drawn to the apparently unstable region of East Africa and the supposedly growing economy of Ethiopia, despite the increasingly bleak situation of human rights in the country. Over all, as the Oakland Institute Report of 2013 stated, "Ethiopia so far has been receiving \$3.5 billion on average in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) from international donors in recent years consistently ranking among the top five ODA recipients globally in the past decade." (p. 6). Among the donors, "the United States, the World Bank, and the United Kingdom make up the top three individual donors respectively. Ethiopia is currently the largest recipient of British aid and is among the largest non-war state recipient of US aid" (Ibid.).

But the massive aid received is not always used as intended. There are numerous reports that the Ethiopian government uses aid money to crush dissent (Ibid.; HRW, 2010; Easterly and Freschy 2010). Several crackdowns on journalists, activists, opposition members, and others have been

associated with the donor money—enhanced coercive capacity of the regime. However, this cannot explain the reduction of insurgency in Ethiopia. After all, the previous regime, the Dergue, was also a recipient of multiple forms of aid from different countries—which enhanced its repressive capacity—during the time it locked in incessant wars with a plethora of rebel groups.

I have so far considered the kind of support successive regimes in Ethiopia have received from different foreign powers. The support has been largely constant, multifarious, and massive. This means that foreign support for regimes cannot in and of itself explain variation in insurgency levels—either across time or across regions. I will now turn to examine the factor that can help us make sense of this variation: foreign support for rebels. Below, I will tease out its patterns, outcomes, and the intricacies involved in its manifestations.

6.2 Foreign Support for Rebels, 1974–2014

This section will be divided into three parts. I will first show the importance of foreign support for rebels, especially in the short-run. I will then move on to discuss the relationship between foreign support and another variable of immense consequence for the durability of insurgency, that is, organizational capacity. The final section will deal with two other variables, foreign leverage and foreign interest, which determine the effects of foreign support even in the short-term.

6.2.1 Insurgents and their Foreign Backers: Initial Heydays

Foreign flow of support for insurgents played an important role in creating and intensifying insurgency in post-revolutionary Ethiopia. As the following discussions will show, direct foreign

help to insurgents was often important, and even essential, to initiating and temporarily escalating insurgent militancy. I will argue that the flow of foreign support for rebel groups can, even in the absence of strong organizational capacity, initiate and intensify insurgency in a country in the short-run. For rebels with strong organizational capacity, foreign support could be an important asset to intensify the struggle; while for rebels with weak organizational capacity, that support will be essential.

Most of the anti-Dergue insurgents were assisted by some foreign power, especially towards the beginning of their struggle against the regime and their competitors, and this has to some extent contributed to the escalation of conflicts and hence the destabilization of their enemies (especially the Dergue regime). The Eritreans had a multitude of supporters, especially in the Arab world. The ELF was exceptional in this respect: the ELF gained international—particularly Arab—fame almost directly after its birth. Through the good offices of Salih Sabbe, the Front opened an office in Damascus in 1963, and the following year it received close to two dozen Kalashnikov rifles. Its 250 guerillas also received a year's training in Aleppo Military Academy in Syria. When a new regime arrived in Iraq in 1968, it also immediately extended some support to the front, most importantly in the training of its officers. Muammar's Libya also funneled support, which was described by Yofdat (1980, 11) as "considerable." Saudi support came in in the form of "small arms, anti-aircraft batteries and landmines (Pateman 1990, 103). Sudan, too, "authorized ELF activities in border areas" for some time (Ibid., 98-99). The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen served as a conduit for arms brought in from other countries; and Palestinian organizations (El Fatah, most notably) and post-coup Somalia trained ELF fighters. Most of this flow of support continued well into the mid-1970s. After a brief lull in Arab relations with the ELF, due partly to strong Ethiopian diplomatic efforts against that

relationship, it resumed once again after 1977. Once the intimate relations of the Dergue with the USSR became a fait accompli, conservative Arab states —and Iran—decided to arm the more conservative Eritrean opposition, that is, ELF against EPLF. Leftist countries such as Iraq and Syria intensified diplomatic and military support. The ELF, in short, got all that it needed to wage a robust insurgency in the Horn of country.

Consequently, the initial successes of the ELF were remarkable. In the 1960s, it overran a large span of Eritrean territory (two-thirds, according to its claims), killing a huge number of Ethiopian soldiers (it claims 5000, but this number could be exaggerated) (Patman 1990, 118). Its successes were achieved after engaging the Ethiopian forces in more than 60 battles. The ELF was indeed a “formidable presence” (Ibid., 119). Its military victories inspired a whole new generation of Ethiopian activists in different parts of the country to stand up against the Ethiopian regimes by joining existing rebel groups or forming new ones. As I will show in the next section, however, the Front did not stay formidable for long, and its decline and eclipse since the late 1970s point to the significance of another factor that better explains the durability of insurgency.

The EPLF was significantly different in terms of receiving foreign aid (and I will come to this later), but it was not waging its struggle alone, either. Some of its founders received training in foreign countries, including China. The Front did receive a wide array of weapons from Arab governments, most importantly Syria and Iraq. They were mostly smuggled, as Gebru Tareke (2008, 74) explains, through Post Sudan with “the tacit approval of the Sudanese government, which also allowed its territory to be used as a safe rear base.” Funds were also raised in different parts of the Middle East and channeled through the same Saleh Sabbe after he broke off relations with the ELF. Finally, “churches, communities and international organizations in Australia, Western Europe . . . and North America gave money and bountiful supplies of food

and clothing, much of it channeled through the Eritrean Relief Association under the auspices of the EPLF” (Ibid., 74). The EPLF also used the funds to initiate its struggle, and Osman Saleh Sabbe’s foreign liaison role was crucial to the EPLF’s survival in the latter’s formative stages, providing the new Front with necessary funds.

The EDU conducted its insurgency with the help of the US and some Arab governments. Saudi and Sudan came first among the latter. Alarmed by the revolutionary and communist credentials of the Dergue regime, the two conservative governments gave significant support to the organization through its leader Ras Mengesha and some sympathizers/members in Saudi Arabia, most importantly Sultan Ali Mirah (Ras Mengesha, interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014). Sudan supplied it “with territory from which to operate, a radio station and a base for [its] fighters and political cadres, and Saudi and CIA provided [the organization] with funding” (Young 1997, 102). Predictably, the EDU’s initial gains were impressive. After its establishment in 1975, it conquered a vast mass of land in northern Ethiopia, including Tigray, Gondar, Gojjam, and Wollo. According to one of its former fighters (interview, Addis Ababa, Sept 2014), “[T]he EDU spread like an epidemic sparing no land for the Dergue to settle in. Whatever land it went to, it liberated it in 24 hours.” In a matter of one or two years it overran Shire, parts of Adwa, Tembien, Endarta (Tigray); Ambagorgios, Simien, Dabat, Achefer, Metekel (in Amhara); and Lalibela, Korem, Sekota, Wikir (Wollo). The EDU seemed to be unstoppable—until it collided with another smaller rebel group operating in Tigray in the late 1970s, as I will discuss below.

The above expositions help us understand the critical significance of foreign support to initiate and escalate insurgency. On the flip side, the absence of such support also has harmful consequences for insurgents with weak organizations. Examples from both pre- and post- 1991 Ethiopia prove this point. Pre-1991, the OLF did not remain a beneficiary of state support for

long, which contributed to the regression of its struggle. The Somali state, otherwise the most important supporter of eastern insurgents (including the WSLF and SALF) and one of the states having the closest geographic and demographic attachment to the front's constituency, did not see it in favorable terms. "The Somali did not sympathize with Oromo nationalist aspirations," whose territorial claims significantly overlapped with those of the WSLF, an ally of the Somali regime (Markakis 1987, 263). The Siad Barre regime also saw no value in promoting a separate Oromo cause outside of the causes of its insurgent allies, notably the SALF, mostly staffed by the Oromo. When the OLF refused to be subsumed under an identity it considered alien ("Somali Abo") or to be controlled by the Somalis as the SALF was, the Somali regime "offered neither assistance nor access to the sea" (Ibid.). While it later tried to mend relations and was allowed to open office in Moqadisho in 1979, it was again expelled only three years later due to altercations on the same issues of identity and structural independence. In the meantime, the OLF was permitted to open an office in the Sudan in 1978, which brought it closer to other Ethiopian insurgents such as the EPLF, which was willing to train some OLF fighters. The Sudanese government provided better aid, most importantly in the late 1980s, when its conflict with the Dergue regime, which supported Sudan's opposition, intensified (de Waal 1991, 319, 323). But external support for the OLF was, overall, minimal compared to that for its counterparts elsewhere in Ethiopia.⁸⁹ And there is no doubt that this "lack of access to sources of supply

⁸⁹ It is here important to point out why OLF was not a beneficiary of support by the major powers of the time, especially the US. Western policy makers tended to favor state "re-constructors" rather than secessionists among Ethiopian rebels. As the 1985 report by Paul Henze, a US policy insider, on rebel activities inside Ethiopia evinces, the TPLF was justified to be favored with US support as the Front apparently aimed "at change in the center, rather than separation" (Henze 1985, vi). The TPLF's stronger military presence inside the country could also be a factor that made the US take the group more seriously and also slightly in favor of supporting it (in the name of humanitarian aid, see below). The OLF, in contrast, was both viewed unfavorably (for its apparent secessionist stance) and, more importantly, trivialized because of its weak military activities in the country. In the words of Henze, "the OLF has little on-the-grounds strength in Ethiopia" and hence is not worthwhile to be supported actively (Ibid.).

abroad was a serious limiting factor” for the OLF’s insurgency (Markakis 1987, 263). Members and sympathizers of the Front repeatedly lamented this fact, and accused international powers of not coming to the side of the Oromo, instead actually fortifying the front’s enemies (see Jalata 2005, chapter 9).

Post-1991, the sharp reduction in insurgency in Ethiopia is also partly attributable to lack of significant foreign support for anti-EPRDF rebels. After TPLF took power, two of Ethiopia’s insurgents, the ONLF and the OLF, were supported by Sudan, since each of them remained out of favor with the new regime in Ethiopia until the mid-1990s. The Sudanese government that came to power in 1989 almost immediately seemed bent on antagonizing its neighbors. One of these was Ethiopia, and the Sudanese antagonism included offering support to Ethiopia’s rebel groups. The insurgents allegedly received arms (Global Security 1997) and “maintained safe houses and training facilities in and around Khartoum with the support of the NIF-controlled government” (HRW 1998). However, Sudan’s support was neither lavish nor durable. When the link between the NIF and the insurgents was established, Ethiopia was not particularly alarmed; its decision to fight Sudan was not due to the actual or potential effects of Sudanese support for rebels, it acted when Mubarak’s car was attacked in Addis Ababa in 1995, resulting in Ethiopia’s embarrassment (de Waal 2004, 206). At any rate, under intense pressure from the front-line states, the Sudanese government gave up supporting Ethiopian rebels. It “removed the OLF [from the Sudanese territory it was based in] and invited Ethiopian security to inspect the evacuated bases” (de Waal 2004, 210).

Somalia offered support to Ethiopian rebels for longer time, but its support was very limited and for the most part took the form of providing sanctuaries to the rebels. Each of the OLF, ONLF, and IFLO had bases inside Somalia at different times. Especially after the eruption of the 1998

war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the latter used Somali territories to funnel support to Ethiopia's opponents. "As part of its military strategy . . . [Eritrea] assisted insurgent groups in Ethiopia such as the OLF and ONLF, using supply lines through Somalia" (Marchal 2004, 138). Somali support for rebels, however, has never been dramatic enough to destabilize Ethiopia, mainly for two reasons. First, there was no Somali state that could actively train and fund Ethiopia's insurgents, as there was in the past. In 2000, the fragile Transitional National Government tried to offer some logistical support to the ONLF and OLF (Marchal 2004, 139) but was itself weak and destabilized because of its own internal problems and the factional infighting in Somalia. Secondly, Ethiopia has also felt the need and has had the capacity to influence the configuration of power politics inside Somalia and maintain a security and political environment that more or less protects its interests. Its minimalist policy since 1996 has been to secure a buffer zone (especially the Gedo region of south-western Somalia) through alliances with its allies inside Somalia, such as the leaders of the Somali Reconciliation and Rehabilitation Council and Ahmed Madobe's Ras Kamboni militia (Hagmann 2014, 29-30; Marchal 2004, 138). But it has not felt obliged to be confined to that policy. "Ethiopians . . . indicated their readiness to intervene militarily up to Mogadisho, if they still faced what they considered a serious threat from any insurgent forces based in Somalia" (Marchal 2004, 130). Much reduced foreign backing to insurgents, hence, has contributed to a much-reduced insurgency in post-1991 Ethiopia.

As will be elaborated below, the present-day reduction in foreign support for Ethiopian rebels has a lot to do with the change in post-Cold War politics world-wide and its implication for regional politics in the Horn of Africa. With lack of support flowing to regional states from opposing superpowers, (potentially) contending countries in the Horn lost interest in continually

destabilizing the US-supported Ethiopia. This created a less hostile regional political atmosphere drastically different from that of the past.

6.2.2 Foreign Support, Organizational Strength and the Durability of Insurgency

This section will build on the theme of the previous one: that although foreign support does influence the escalation of insurgency in the short-run, it does not guarantee the maintenance of that insurgency in the long run. In other words, it might contribute to the development of short- to medium-term political instability, but in most cases it cannot, on its own, ensure either the durability of strong insurgency or the success of that insurgency in overthrowing incumbent regimes. As I aim to illustrate, whether insurgency endures is largely dependent on the other variable I considered in the previous chapter: organizational capacity. In the long-term, foreign aid may not be a substitute for organizational capacity. As a state-rebel or inter-rebel confrontation drags on and gets more difficult, insurgents can only depend on their internal strength rather than external support for their survival and the strength of their struggle. Insurgents that manage to build strong organizations will not need foreign support to sustain active insurgency, although the presence of support could undoubtedly boost their power.

6.2.2.1 The Eritrean Fronts

Foreign assistance, although of a huge value in initiating an insurgency, was neither necessary (for organizationally strong rebel groups) nor sufficient to sustain and win an insurgency in pre-1991 Ethiopia. In fact, some of the most successful and durable insurgents were the most self-sufficient ones. The EPLF (and the TPLF to some extent, see below) serve as a good example. As illustrated above, foreign assistance was flowing to the EPLF and could have played some role in the latter's initial/medium-term military achievements. Nevertheless, as the following

discussion illustrates, one cannot assign too much explanatory power to it concerning the Front's durability, which was, rather, a product of its superior organizational capacity.

Several sources concur that the EPLF practiced self-sufficiency to a great extent, and that much of the assistance it received was important only during its initial stages. After it severed relations with Saleh Sabbe, the channels of foreign (government) assistance dwindled, and this was reflected in the lives of its fighters. They "noted the deterioration of food" as the Front "bought the poorest quality of sorghum from Sudan" (Pool 2001, 142). Neighboring countries like Sudan offered only "nominal transport facilities for medicine and relief supplies" (Patman 1990, 103). According to an EPLF commander (Ibid.), "from 1980, no country gave the EPLF military aid; before that, Iraq, Kuwait and certain Palestinian organizations provided it with limited aid." as Tseggai (1988: 82) puts it,

This facet of the Eritrean revolution, based on an Eritrean-style concept of an "overall principle of self-reliance" has earned admiration or envy from every corner of the world. With meager resources and no significant outside help, its ability to continue to carry through programmes of social change while, at the same time, growing and consolidating in the military field, attests to the EPLF's organizational efficiency and know-how.

The bulk of the front's material resources, especially its arsenals, came from the Ethiopian army (Tareke 2009, 74) and the EPLF put them to good use. That the EPLF got most of its military equipment through its successive and successful wars with the regime was a source of deep dissatisfaction among the senior members of the junta, and President Mengistu has disclosed it

several occasions.⁹⁰ Once acquired, the resources were used and maintained with maximum care and efficiency. The Front developed a unique mobile workshop in Africa, which handled “the repair of trucks, metal work, carpentry and joinery, textiles and radio repairs. Skilled manual labour is the basis of all these operations” (Chaliand 1980, 51). EPLF’s workshops and factories also “employed... generators, metal and woodworking machines, sewing machines and x-ray units” (Gottesman 1998, 54). “Not only are spare parts, cooking utensils, teaching materials, aids for the disabled, and hospital equipment [are] put together from captured debris of war, but the EPLF is also constructing many of the machines necessary for producing these items . . . the process is almost literally from shells to ploughshares” (Firebrace and Holland, in *Ibid.*, 55). EPLF technicians could enhance the productive capacity of their machines by copying “the principle from an imported model and built [another] one themselves” (*Ibid.*).

Such notable self-reliance and organizational efficiency, rather than transnational assistance, were at the heart of the durable and intense military engagements of the EPLF. From 1977 onwards, a bulk of conservative Arab governments started to favor ELF over the EPLF. In the circumstances, where the USSR and Arabs were heavily arming the Dergue and the ELF respectively, one might expect the increasingly isolated EPLF to be eclipsed by its transnationally well-connected enemies. However, it was during this time that the Front was able to “capture the towns of Karora, Elghena, Afabet, Nacfa, Keren, Decamere, most of Massawa” and put “Asmara under siege for over a year” (Patman 1990, 105). The ELF, on the other hand, with all the support from its Arab allies, could not achieve such success and controlled less territory (*Ibid.*). “A judicious view,” therefore, “would seem to be that Arab military support has

⁹⁰ See for example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68FxmZe2BU>. Mengistu, in a bitter tone, rhetorically tells some members of the army: “Our government equips both you and the enemy—don’t you know this?”

been relatively modest; while financial assistance, although significant in early years, is by no means the primary reason for the success of the Eritrean liberation struggle [waged by the EPLF]” (Ibid., 103). That primary reason lies somewhere else: the all-out international effort to destroy the EPLF was balanced, according to Iyob (1995, 132), “by the EPLF’s superior organizational efficiency, innovative coordination of guerilla and conventional military tactics, and committed fighters.” As seen in chapter four, the EPLF’s coherent leadership and tight command structure created committed, disciplined and skilled fighters waging a well-coordinated set of insurgent activities that finally managed to offset the loss in international assistance.⁹¹

The case of the ELF—whom the EPLF weakened and finally defeated—was very different. Certainly, the ELF enjoyed huge foreign backing, as seen above, and hence the reason for its relatively shorter life span lies not in the nature of its international connection, but rather in its weak organizational capacity. The Front had neither a coherent leadership nor a centralized command structure. The way the Front was organized in the first place would create favorable conditions for factionalism. Much like the WSLF and unlike the EPLF, the ELF’s leaders structured the organization in accordance with the tribal divisions of the Eritrean lowlands. Four, and later on five, zones of the ELA coincided with different tribes, and each zone—having its own commander, political commissar, as well as security, logistics and health sections—was operating almost independently of the other zones. Each of the three diaspora-based leaders of the fronts established personal (not organizational), clan-based clientelist relations with the commander of a specific zone. This structure led to serious problems when the three leaders

⁹¹See chapter four for an in-depth analysis of the nature of the organizational capacity of the EPLF and the origins thereof.

disagreed and when coordination between different zones became a necessity on the field. Division within the leadership was automatically reflected in the alignment of the loyalties of zone commanders, and hence in the armies those commanders led. Moreover, even when the division within the leadership was not so intense, the absence of any horizontal links between the zones created an environment conducive to factionalism.

Among the manifestations of its loose organizational structure (or lack of effective centralization) was the lack of discipline among its fighters (see Bereketgab 2016, 91-92). Fighters did not commit themselves to the struggle on a full-time basis, fighting only when were motivated to do so and travelling to Sudan on vacation if they became war-weary. They also used the chance to carry arms to settle personal feuds among families: “It was not unusual for a whole unit to engage in retribution of a kind perhaps not sanctioned by the central leadership” (Ibid., 92). Such arbitrary acts, outcomes of the deficiency of enforcement mechanisms such as lack of adequate military trainings and effective disciplining/punishment mechanisms, harmed the image of the rebel movement, reducing its support among many sections of the Eritrean population.

Factionalism and disintegration usually increase with military failure, which is itself a function of organizational problems. For the ELF, the first round of factionalism came in 1967, when the Ethiopian Army pounded ELF units from land and air. The regime, aware of the weaknesses of the front, attacked and crippled each zone in isolation. “Jebha units acquitted themselves poorly, as the five zonal commands were so decentralized that they were unable to coordinate any meaningful resistance” (Woldemariam 2011, 102). Hence, “confused and bewildered, Jebha cadres fled in a haphazard and disorganized fashion, leaving the predominantly Muslim communities that had given them food and shelter to face government troops” (Ibid.). The impact

of this defeat sent shockwaves through the already weak organization, and a strong pro-reformist movement emerged almost immediately. The protection of human rights and the centralization of the military were among the primary demands of the reformists. Unable to deal with the dissent effectively, either through peaceful or violent means, the leaders went on losing control over the fast-unfolding events. Continuing factionalism and fragmentation finally led to the creation of splinter groups out of the ELF, thereby leading to the decline of the strength of the front. But it survived thereafter and even showed signs of resuscitation due mainly to the change in the military targets of the Ethiopian state after the revolution erupted,⁹² as well as the subsequent divisions within the military junta that made unified state attack difficult (Pool 2001). But more generally, the revolution-stricken state lost its robustness in the early 1970s, giving the ELF the chance to survive for a few more years. However, unable to resolve its basic organizational problems and also now facing a more coherent, centralized, and efficient contender (the EPLF), it did not have any meaningful existence beyond the early 1980s. At the same time that foreign aid was flowing into the pockets of its leaders, from 1972 onward the Front continued to encounter serious setbacks on the field, and was finally wiped out by the joint attack of the EPLF and the TPLF in 1981.

6.2.2.2 The TPLF and EDU

The cases of the TPLF and its contenders (most notably the EDU) provide—to some extent—more evidence in favor of the feasibility of self-reliance (for organizationally strong rebel

⁹²The survival of the ELF before the downfall of Emperor Haile Sellasie's regime in 1974 cannot actually be considered an "achievement" in the same way as the post-revolutionary persistence of any rebel group in the country. This is mainly because "compared with the late socialist state, the military capacity of the imperial regime was small" (Clapham 2002, 13). Hence, given the assumption in this dissertation about the "robustness" of the state that the insurgents target, my focus throughout will be post-revolutionary insurgency inside Ethiopia.

groups) and the insufficiency of external support in the conduct of durable insurgency. The TPLF never had, at least until the mid-1980s, any significant direct flow of financial or military support from any Eastern, Western or Arab country—not even from fellow insurgents. Not one of its top military men was trained abroad. Few of the initial fighters received their military training and weapons from their Eritrean counterparts, and those weapons that did come from them were not sufficient nor was their delivery to the Front reliable. In fact, the EPLF—after training only a handful of fighters and supplying them with just “two AK47s, one Simonov, one Uzi, three hand grenades and eight old rifles”—proved it was “not serious in the progress of the Tigraian struggle, and almost everybody in the TPLF was offended by the token arms offered by the EPLF” (Berhe 2008, 168). The fact that there was no constant or sizeable flow of assistance from the EPLF to the TPLF downplayed the significance of foreign support in the TPLF’s protracted struggle.

Although Aregawi Berhe (2008, 255) claims that the ELF at some point introduced the TPLF to Arab regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt, “which offered advantages to the TPLF,” there is little evidence of significant aid from these regimes. Even help from the most sympathetic neighboring country was not very important in material or military terms. The TPLF had no armed camps in Sudan, and “as yet there is no evidence that the Sudanese regimes of Nimeri or Sadiq al Mahdi supplied the Front with weapons or let them carry weapons in the country” (Young 1994, 185-186). Both governments simply permitted the Front to open offices and carry out political and humanitarian activities among the Tigrayan refugees. These activities no doubt helped the TPLF in mobilizing and orienting would-be fighters at a safe distance from the assault of the Ethiopian regime without, however, impairing the fierce sense of independence of the Tigrayan movement. But active military and economic support did not come to the Front.

The TPLF staunchly adhered to self-reliance, taking it as one of its most important principles. It is not surprising, then, that the Front favored Albania as a model country, admiring its outright independence from both superpowers. But the TPLF did not establish any relations in that country, including with the Albanian Labor Party (Young 1994, 243).

The major source of the TPLF's armory has been the Ethiopian government itself. Every fighter was instructed from the start that the main source of arms was the enemy and that they were to collect what they could from them (Berhe 2008, 172). As no other reliable options were available, this instruction was ingrained in the minds of the fighters, who followed it persistently, often out of desperation, as of the front's songs demonstrates:

Bahhrina ti hafash hizbina

Eerdina gobotat Aadina

Et'kina kabtom tselaetena

...

Our sea is our people

Our trench is every mountain of our land

Our source of arms is the enemy ... (Ibid., 172)

For its major sources of funding, the TPLF initially relied heavily on alms and bank raids, later also turning to crop cultivation, taxation, and diaspora donations. The daily and basic needs of the fighters were usually covered by well-wishing peasants who admired them for their tenacity and modesty—and sometimes their cause as well. In terms of engaging in bank raids, one of the most significant sources of funds (and weapons for that matter) in its earliest years were the simultaneous operations on an Ethiopian bank and a police garrison in Axum in 1975 (Berhe

2008, 194-195). As the front's military activities continued to bear fruits, self-sufficiency became practicable; in particular, the capture of surplus-producing regions of northern Gondar, such as Dejena, gave the Front an enormous landmass to be used for cultivation. "With its farms in Sheraro and Raya/Azebo added," Tareke reports (2009, 96), it is believed that the front's total cultivated land exceeded 160,000 hectares. It cultivated vegetables and fruits, and exported these—as well as livestock and their products—to Sudan. It also collected taxes from merchants (Ibid.). Finally, the Tigrayan diaspora came to play a significant role on the diplomatic, financial, and military fronts: they brought the TPLF's struggle into the international spotlight, provided funds for the military and relief activities of the TPLF, and served as recruitment bases for potential fighters (Young 1994, 185).

Another controversial source of funding was the donations the TPLF received through its humanitarian wing, Relief Society of Tigray (REST), established in 1978 to administer relief and development from international donors, the US included, during the 1984 famine in Tigray. Although the funds may have helped to finance its military operations (Berhe 2008, 227), it is not entirely clear to what extent this was the case. Whether a large portion of it went to organizational and military activities is a matter of intense debate among former senior members of the TPLF (see the debate between Aregawi Berhe and Aregash Adane, VOA, Mar 2010). According to Aregawi Berhe (online communication, March, 2017), the funding played an essential role in keeping up the high level of intensity of the war; however, sustaining the insurgency would have been possible even without the funds. All in all, therefore, the TPLF managed to fight persistently over such a long period with home-grown and Tigrayan-based finance, in extreme contrast to its enemies which had solid transnational patronage.

The EDU is a good illustration of the latter. As seen above, the EDU was a heavily funded organization, armed with the most advanced weapons of the time supplied by a multitude of foreign powers. Its fighters took this fact seriously, deeming it a source of pride and victory for their struggle. EDU members showed great contempt for the youthful, destitute, and relatively few TPLF fighters (see Young 1997, 101, 104). The outcome of the war between the two, therefore, would have been unexpected for many. After an exhausting struggle, the TPLF emerged victorious by 1978, and drove the EDU out of Tigray, a region the latter never managed to set its foot on thereafter. Although its small surviving units continued to exist in the Gondar region, it was no longer a force to reckon with. The outcomes of TPLF's battles with the EDU—all of which were *fought well before the starting of the flow of the controversial international funds to the TPLF or even of the cultivation of land and domestic taxation*—seriously weaken any assumption that gives too much importance to foreign assistance in explaining the durability of an insurgency.

The defeat of the EDU again highlights an interesting lesson about foreign state-rebel connection: foreign help cannot compensate, in the long-run, for the internal weaknesses of a rebel movement. The EDU was a loose organization with a high degree of independence of fighters on the ground. The command system was not tight enough for the organization to “own” the lives of its members. Many of the fighters who joined the EDU-led movement did so for personal reasons that had nothing to do with the self-declared mission of the organization, which was to bring about democracy in and unity among the peoples of Ethiopia (ex-EDU member, interview, 2014). Once absorbed into the “EDU system,” these fighters did not get the ideological and political training necessary to turn them into a fighting force with unbreakable tenacity and ideological focus. Enforcement mechanisms were virtually non-existent in the

organization. As its most distinguished leader, Ras Mengesha Seyoum, put it, “the poor peasant fighters would at times succeed in securing weapons from the enemy, then sell them away and re-start life anew as *nouveau riche*” (interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014). The “poorly motivated and ill-disciplined” (Young, 104) fighters of the EDU were not reliable assets in the hands of the rebel movement they claimed to fight for. The showering of arms and money from abroad⁹³ thus could not fill gap left by the EDU’s lack in organizational and mobilizational terms.

6.2.3 Foreign Support, Foreign Leverage, and Foreign Interest

Foreign support works to upgrade insurgency, but should be seen in conjunction with the organizational capacity of rebels, especially concerning the durability of insurgency. This was the general theme of the foregoing discussion. But foreign support should, in addition, be seen alongside two other variables that determine its impact even in the short-term. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, foreign support helps to initiate/intensify insurgency when there is a high degree of foreign leverage along with aggressive foreign state policy. It also helps to initiate/intensify insurgency when there is low leverage. It does not, however, work towards intensification of insurgency when it is accompanied by high leverage and conservative foreign state policy.

In this section of the chapter, I will examine cases of high foreign-state leverage combined with aggressive and conservative foreign state interests. As argued in the theoretical chapter, aggressive foreign-policy orientation is the default position of states that extend support for rebels. What makes them conservative, according to this study, is when they are defeated in a war with a state that is, itself, the target of rebels they support. The discussion will demonstrate

⁹³As we saw above.

the validity of these assumptions by considering cases from both pre- and post-1991 Ethiopia. I will first look at two insurgent groups from the military era whose boom and bust closely correlated with the change in the interests of the foreign state they were totally dependent on, change that resulted from the state's defeat in a costly war. And then I will consider the case of several contemporary insurgent groups based in Eritrea whose battlefield paralysis can partly be explained by the nature of the relationship with that country.

6.2.3.1 The WSLF and SALF

The most spectacular examples of the conjunction of high foreign state leverage with aggressive foreign state policy are the WSLF and SALF. These same fronts are, at the same time, remarkable examples of the conjunction of high foreign state leverage with conservative foreign state policy. Their stories illustrate the impacts of foreign leverage in not only intensifying insurgency initially but also contributing to its demise.

The SALF was an insurgent group made up of the Oromo of Bale, who had viewed the Ethiopian state in unfavorable terms ever since they were forcefully incorporated into it during one of the Menelikan expeditions of the 19th century. Right after the crushing in 1968 of the Bale Rebellion against the state functionaries in their locale, which had been their most visible resistance, many of them fled to Somalia. The leader of the rebellion, Waqo Gutu, established contacts from inside Ethiopia with his comrades in Somalia before the downfall of the Haile Sellasie government, and also stepped up the connection afterwards (a close aide of Waqo, interview, Addis Ababa, Nov 2014). According to my informant (Ibid.), with the imminence of his capture by the Dergue, he escaped to Somalia and joined his compatriots, where they began to consider re-kindling the resistance movement. Some of the activists had received military training in foreign countries

such as North Korea. Meanwhile, the Somali government was by this time entertaining irredentist plans and was looking for ways of putting them into practice. The first of its moves was to set up organizations that could act on its behalf before it directly intervened into Ethiopian territory. Hence, the SALF was established in 1976 by assembling all Oromos of Bale as well as a few other ethnic groups such as the Somali and Sidama (two ex-SALF senior members, interview, Addis Ababa, Jan 2015).

The Siad government was deeply involved in the affairs of the front, from beginning to end—an involvement that angered many of its members, who wanted to be supported but not controlled. The very name of the rebel group betrayed strong Somali interference. Elements within the Oromo of Bale, highly motivated to reactivate the rebellion in a more organized and nationalist way, wanted it to be Oromo in nature, rather than Bale or Arsi. However, the Siad government refused to acknowledge the Oromo name, claiming that the Oromo had already been empowered in revolutionary Ethiopia and insisting the activists should take on a Somali label. This met intense opposition among the Oromo, including veteran fighter Waqo Gutu. Having realized that the only option left for them to fight the Dergue was to submit to Siad Barre's will, they agreed to take the label and launch the insurgency (former senior member of SALF, interview, Addis Ababa, Jan 2015). The group was fully funded, trained, and armed by the Somali government, which closely watched its every operation. "Training camps were set up along the Somali border, at Morigabey for the Bale unites and at Dolo for those in Sidamo, and these functioned also as supply and communications bases" (Markakis 1987, 228). Both of the front's zones of operations, Bale and Sidamo, "came under the authority of the [Somali] army southern command, and [they] had Somali army officers attached to them" (Ibid., 227). The leverage of the Somali state was remarkably high.

The WSLF, whose historical background I outline in another chapter, was also very dependent on the Siad Barre regime in conducting its insurgency. Just like the SALF, the WSLF originally reflected the accumulated grievance of the Ethiopian Somalis against the state. Even more so than the SALF, it took organizational shape under the strict control of the Siad regime despite the wishes of the fighters. These had never imagined serving the agenda of the Somali government, and wanted instead to launch a domestic movement, as discussed above. The meeting that founded the Front was prepared and attended by Siad-selected individuals. The first secretary general, Abdullahi Mohammed, was an official in the Ministry of Education in Barre's government (Markakis 1987, 225). This same government also closely guarded the activities of the rebel organization. When the Front began its operations in 1976, the first batch of fighters were led by a Somali army officer, Captain Ahmed Sheikh, who also led all the three zones of operation of the WSLF, the northern, south-eastern, and central, which later became the center of massive military activity. The successive units infiltrating Ethiopia received their instructions directly from the Ministry of Defence in Mogadisho through radio contact and had no connections with their own representatives in Somalia. In fact, the whole operation of the movement formally came under the overall command of the same ministry (Ibid.).

The Somali regime was fiercely opposed to the Ethiopian state and decided to punish it and promote its interests aggressively through these two rebel forces. Initially, the SALF's and WSLF's moves were all successful. Emboldened by their power and the resources at their disposal, the two fronts mobilized "several tens of thousands of fighters" and stepped up the guerilla warfare in eastern Ethiopia (ex-WSLF fighter, interview, Jijiga, Dec 2014; ex-SALF senior member, interview, Addis Ababa, Jan, 2015). By 1977, immediately before the commencement of the Ethio-Somali war, SALF and WSLF drove Ethiopian forces away from

the countryside and put them under control. Both the quantity and quality of arms supplied improved as they progressed, and “as the Somali government was drawn deeper into the conflict.” During the heyday of the insurgents (1977), “Kalashnikovs and American M16 had become basic weapons” (Markakis, 1987, 228). The Ethiopian army was relegated to few garrison towns. Morally uplifted by their success, the rebels immediately started to set up local administrative structures in the liberated areas and assume governmental roles therein. Hence, with the high leverage of the Somali state over the WSLF and SALF, and its aggressive policy towards Ethiopia, the two fronts managed to intensify their insurgencies inside eastern Ethiopia.

After a while, however, there came a change of policy on the part of Siad Barre, from aggressive to conservative, following his direct war with Ethiopia and his final defeat, a policy change that came at a high cost for the two fronts it had previously supported. It was at the height of the WSLF’s and SALF’s power that the Somali regime decided to directly invade Ethiopia. Several reasons have been put forward to explain this decision. Markakis (1987, 229) notes that the Somali regime wanted to strike hard at the Ethiopian government at a time when the USSR seemed to favor Mengistu but had not yet begun arming his troops. Secondly, Djibouti’s independence and the anti-Greater Somalia fervor visible among many Djiboutian Somalis made the Somali regime fear that Ogadenis might follow suit. The SALF (and WSLF) activists, for their part, suggest that Somali incursion was due to the concern the regime had over the victories the guerillas achieved and the imminence of their establishment of administrative structures in the “liberated” areas (interview, Addis Ababa, Jan 2015). After all, the aim of the Siad government was to take over the administration of these areas after annexing them into Somalia, not to leave them for the guerillas. These arguments notwithstanding, as the Somali army entered into Ethiopia, the guerillas were displaced by Somali forces. But their total

elimination from the battlefield had to wait for the total defeat of the Somali regime at the hands of the Ethiopian government.

As Ethiopian forces began to take the offensive against the Somali forces, the condition of the insurgents continued to deteriorate. As a result of internal organizational problems, they continued to lose territories. Although some dispersed guerilla bands from Bale tried to resume the struggle, they could not resist the offensives of the Cuban- and USSR-backed Dergue. While many potential fighters who had been based in Mogadisho were intent on resuming the struggle against the Ethiopian regime, they could not cross the border. They were barred from infiltrating into Ethiopian territory and carrying on the insurgency. Cuban and Ethiopian soldiers came across the border, and the badly weakened Somali regime could not afford to provoke them any longer. Barre had already hamstrung the Fronts when it finally signed a Peace Accord with Mengistu in 1988, both of whom became wary of the shifting international alignment of forces and worried over growing internal challenges to their respective rule (Woodward 1996, 127; Markakis 2011, 213). They agreed to stop supporting each other's opposition forces—an official death blow to the tottering SALF. It was ordered to stop any anti-regime activities inside Ethiopia, and it never acted after that⁹⁴.

As for the WLSF, its initial successes (it controlled more lands than the SALF) were eclipsed partly due to Dergue offensives and partly due to Somali involvement. As it was pounded by the former (as well as its allies, the SNM), it began crumbling due to its internal problems (see the third chapter). Hence, another adversary in the form of the Somali government (as it later turned out to be) was not necessary to degrade its fighting power. However, even after its defeat by the

⁹⁴ It had already been a spent force a bit longer ago anyway.

Dergue, it could have continued fighting—albeit at a lower key—with the government, as there was always a chance that some of its fighters who had fled to or were already stationed in Somalia would regroup and restart the war. As I stated elsewhere, its weak organizational capacity would not automatically lead to its demise. If it had been not attacked by the Ethiopian regime to its death and had been left on its own to survive (waging a low-intensity insurgency as did the OLF), it could have survived much longer. However, the policies of the Somali government prevented this possibility, hence ensuring the group’s ultimate demise.

Many Somali interventions were detrimental to the front. For instance, only seven months after its formation, around six members of the CC were expelled by the Somali government and the deputy secretary general was thrown into jail. The cause was disagreement with Siad over the timing and necessity of launching the insurgency. Then, after the Somali incursion into the Ogaden, the regime imposed central control, frustrating the WSLF’s attempt to establish civilian administration. The insurgency leaders were put out of operation and taken into custody. Most strikingly, the CC of the rebel organization was forced to remain in Mogadisho, as the fighters “under them” flocked to fight alongside the Somali army. As frustrations with Siad grew among the WSLF members, demands for independence started to air. Barre’s response was to state, “I am not going to cook meals and have them eaten by others” (Markakis 1987, 231).

With the defeat of the Somali army, WSLF fighters retreated back to Somalia, humiliated and demoralized but not totally defeated internally. They were then, as seen earlier, commanded to never try to re-start a war with the Ethiopian regime. The military chief of the WSLF attempted to violate that rule and ended up in prison. The internally ailing organization was then left to die out on its own. The remaining activists learned the hard lesson: that waging a protracted Ogadeni liberation struggle under the complete control of the Somali regime cannot succeed mainly

because the latter's interests do not necessarily coincide with those of the people of Ogaden (interview with five former WSLF fighters, Jijiga, Dec 2014).

Shut out of any possibility of extricating themselves from the Somali government's iron fist, the SALF and the WSLF—once the most visible forces in eastern Ethiopia—were rendered obscure by the mid-1980s. Their demise—partly caused by excessive dependence on a power that radically changed its anti-Mengistu rhetoric and behavior after its defeat in a war with the military regime—illustrates the important lesson that autonomy is a crucial factor for the survival of a rebel group and the durability of its insurgency. The less leverage a foreign power has over the rebels it supports, the less their chances of being victims of vicissitudes in the interests of that power. The greater its leverage over them, however, the more their fate is determined by what it wants to do with them: that is, to use them to destabilize its enemy-regime or to simply toss them aside and let them die away.

At this juncture, it is befitting to consider the case of the OLF and its connection with the Somali regime, as it clarifies what the consequences of less Somali leverage would have been for the Somali-supported rebels. As pointed out earlier, the OLF's relationship with Siad Barre's regime was tense, mainly due to OLF's insistence on remaining quasi-independent ideologically, structurally, and operationally. The OLF was in acute need of Somali support and actively sought it—but not at all costs. When its members were asked to join the SALF and forego their separate front, they refused. They willingly accepted eviction from Somali territories—areas that, it seemed at the time, could have provided the most promising quality and quantity of aid for Ethiopian insurgents. These moves clearly had negative impacts concerning the short-term intensification of the OLF's activities, as noted above. But they turned out to be a boon with regard to the durability of the OLF's insurgency. By saving itself from being “a tool of the

Somalis” (Markakis, 1987, 263), the OLF boosted its staying power. The contrast between the short-lived boom and bust of the wars of the WSLF and SALF is striking.

Before closing the discussion on the effects of insurgent dependence in the pre-1991 era, it is important to note the cases of insurgents that had high foreign backing but were subjected to low foreign-state leverage. As I stated in the theoretical chapter, the practical outcome of this combination of variables is the same as that for high foreign backing and dependence on an aggressive foreign state, controlling for organizational capacity. Almost all of the cases of insurgents seen in the previous section—ELF, EPLF, EDU, and TPLF—had something in common: they were all independent of the control of the foreign states that backed them, unlike the WSLF and SALF. They had their own goals; they fully controlled their organizations; and they ran their strategic and tactical affairs without notable direct interference from outside. True, they had sanctuaries in neighboring countries, but their major base areas were located somewhere else (inside Ethiopia). This sense of independence had one common effect: it helped them to step up their insurgency as high as they wanted and as high as their organizational capacity and their support from outside would allow. It is true that two of them—the EDU and ELF—did not persist for much longer than the WSLF and SALF, and hence it may be difficult, in such cases, to discern the effects of high/low leverage on insurgent outcomes.

However, the cases of the pre-1991 OLF and the post-1991 Ethiopian rebels highlight the importance of maintaining independence from the control of certain foreign states. Subjected to low leverage of foreign states, the OLF managed to extend its duration, even when it had low foreign support and weak organizational capacity. It may be impossible to know for certain what the outcome of the WSLF insurgency would have been without Somali dependence. The most likely outcome of lack of Somali interference (and support), however, would have been similar

to the case of the OLF: with low foreign support and low leverage, the WSLF may not have provoked the anger of the Dergue, and hence been spared lethal state attacks in order to survive for a longer period as a low-key insurgency. What we know for sure is that the final blow was delivered by the external ally it depended on. In a similar fashion, the EDU and ELF benefited from being independent, a factor that should not be eclipsed by the fact that their insurgency was short-lived, which was a product of another set of factors. Their low durability insurgency is attributable to their weak organization and the fatal series of attacks by their enemies, attacks that were an outcome of the threat they posed to these enemies, given the high level of foreign support they received. But the cases that best clarify the impact of foreign dependence are the post-1991 insurgents of Ethiopia, which have been subjected to low durability, low intensity insurgency due mainly to the nature of their external connection. It is to these cases that I now turn.

6.2.3.2 The Eritrean-based Insurgents

The fateful cases of the WSLF and SALF insurgency provide useful insight into a major cause for the decline of insurgency in post-1991 Ethiopia. In conjunction with problems associated with organizational structure, the chief reasons for the overall decline in the intensity and durability of insurgency in current Ethiopia, as was partly⁹⁵ the case for those two Fronts, were the enormous leverage the sole foreign backer had over the insurgents and the apparent lack of interest on the part of that backer—while still supporting them—to transform their potential to strike the Ethiopian regime. The post-Cold War changes in global and regional political alignment of forces are responsible for the total dependence of almost all current Ethiopian

⁹⁵ “Partly” because they at least boomed before they busted unlike the insurgents of today. See few lines below.

rebels on Eritrea. While this dependence was a concern basically for eastern insurgents during the Dergue period, it has been a source of apprehension for almost all existing insurgents in present-day Ethiopia. What Siad Barre's Somalia was for the WSLF and SALF, Isayas Afeworki's Eritrea has been for EPRDF's armed enemies—with one key exception: Barre at least earnestly helped to initiate a strong insurgency inside Ethiopia before he decided to dampen it after his military defeat; Isayas, in contrast, has shown little serious interest in enabling the Ethiopian insurgents under his control to even initiate meaningful insurgency inside Ethiopia. His apparent complete lack of interest in promoting an aggressive agenda towards the rebels he supports is arguably a direct effect of, among other things, the Ethio-Eritrean War of 1998–2000, which radically transformed the self-image of the dictator and his party and made him wary of a second round of Ethiopian invasion that would threaten his rule over Eritrea.

Currently, Eritrea is considered to be the only state in the world that officially gives support to Ethiopian rebels. This has been the case since it fell out with its neighbor in 1998. It is ironic to see, at the same time, that its support has not led to any meaningful insurgency inside Ethiopia. The irony can be explained by two core factors. First, Eritrea, a country with a high degree of leverage over Ethiopian rebels, has, secondly, questionable interest in actually enabling the rebels it supports to intensify their wars against the Ethiopian regime. This phenomenon of rebel dependence on a conservative state leading to a low durability, low intensity insurgency, already presented in theory in chapter two, finds its best empirical illustration in the following exposition on the Eritrean-insurgent connection.

I will note first, however, that the argument presented in this section challenges the dominant narrative about proxy war in Horn region in the post-Cold War era. Based on the fact that Eritrea harbors and provides different kinds of aid for Ethiopian insurgents, many writers on the Horn

politics (for instance, Abbink 2003; ICG 2008) have contended in different ways that the Ethio-Eritrean conflict has negative ramifications for regional instability. The classical conduct of “proxy wars” along with their dire consequences—something the region has been rocked by since the 1960s—has continued, they have argued, into our era, as Eritrea and Ethiopia have backed each other’s oppositions. The core problem with this line of argument, I contend, is that it confuses foreign support for rebels with foreign interest to destabilize other regimes. As will be clear from the discussion below, Eritrea does support Ethiopian insurgents, but that support is not necessarily meant to intensify insurgency inside Ethiopia, but to advance Eritrea’s interest vis-à-vis Ethiopia by using the insurgent groups as bargaining chips.⁹⁶ A core variable—foreign interest—should be taken into consideration in the analysis, in addition to mere foreign support.

Eritrea’s relation with the insurgents has had two apparently different faces. On the one hand, the Eritrean government has contributed a great deal in the emergence and development of Ethiopian insurgents based inside its territory, as well as in recruitment and training of their fighters and in their mobilizational and operational works. It covers all the amenities the groups require to stay as armed groups. It provides land, shelter, food, clothing, and weaponry for the soldiers and their leaders. In this sense, it does seem that Eritrea creates favorable conditions for the flourishing and conduct of armed movement in Ethiopia; it is the source of all kinds of foreign support for the rebels, and provides that support arguably lavishly.

Ironically, however, there is an opposite side to Eritrean involvement in rebel activity. One can justifiably argue that the Horn country, by using its high leverage over the rebels based in its

⁹⁶ The scope of the challenge I present here is limited to Eritrea’s role in supporting Ethiopian opposition. In other instances of proxy war between the two countries, such as the role they played in destabilizing neighboring Somalia after 2005, it is too obvious to be challenged.

territories, has played an active role in limiting their mobilizational capacity. By fracturing the organizational unity along ethnic lines, by creating and escalating discord among rebel leaders, by reducing their potential to increase the number of their fighters, by forestalling the possibility of building a centralized command structure, and by restricting their movement and interfering with their propaganda works Eritrea has worked towards the military incapacitation of Ethiopian insurgent groups. All these adverse interventions have in turn diminished the morale of many rebel fighters and have also dashed the hope many Ethiopians had in fighting the Ethiopian regime from Eritrea. They believe—and their belief is supported by the findings of this research—that Eritrea has no real interest in destabilizing the Ethiopian regime. In short, Eritrea has a conservative foreign policy orientation towards Ethiopia.

Eritrea, just like Somalia in the 1970s, has a high degree of leverage over the rebels it supports (ex-EPPF member, phone interview, June 2014; ex-OLF member, online interview, Feb 2015; ex-G7 member, interview, Addis Ababa, Aug 2014). Eritrea provides all financial and military resources for all groups. It presides over any major organizational meetings or discussions the leaders hold. It also takes part in the general assemblies of some organizations. Eritrean colonels and security chiefs are practically the major contact persons for many insurgent groups. Any international representative of these organizations usually goes through these personalities before going to the leaders themselves. Eritrean officials are also in charge of the insurgents' media. They are the ultimate arbiters of the content of the news releases and propaganda work. Some news bites about military operations do appear on insurgent websites without the knowledge of the insurgent leaders themselves. The officials also directly initiate the creation of some insurgent groups, for example, the TPDM. They also indirectly facilitate the creation of others, of which the Amhara Democratic Movement is just one instance. Leaders of organizations defer

any major decisions about organizational activity to Eritrean officials in charge of Ethiopian insurgents. They feel the need to either consult them or reserve for them the final decision, including the composition of leadership. Furthermore, the authorities closely guard organizations' military operations. Most importantly, Eritrea is the sole base area for almost all of the Ethiopian rebel movements that have offices in the former's territory—or any Ethiopian rebel organization for that matter. None of them has anywhere else to go to in search of greater independence.⁹⁷ The shadow of Eritrea is everywhere across the barren lands it has reserved for the “flourishing” of Ethiopian insurgency.

Isayas's Eritrea, in sharp contrast to Siad Barre's Somalia, has from the very beginning worked against the interests of the rebels it supports/controls. There are several examples to illustrate this. One of the most harmful aspects of Eritrean interference in the affairs of Ethiopian rebels is its role in creating difficult conditions for the emergence of cohesive and strong leadership. This can be seen in the sowing of seeds of discord or, more accurately, in escalating the already existing discord among leaders. Eritrea has also persistently gotten rid of independence-seeking and dedicated rebel leaders, replacing them with those deemed acquiescent to its dictations. The Eritrean government's actions have in some instances created/escalated friction among leaders of insurgent groups and/or forestalled the creation of a scenario whereby unified leadership could emerge. The EPPF is a useful illustration of both instances. The EPPF has never had a unified leadership, until perhaps the current one under Meazaw came to power in 2007. As indicated in an earlier chapter, the discord within the leadership had regional, personal, or educational—or a combination of all—dimensions. Although the creation of this dissonance could ultimately be

⁹⁷See below for the reasons. In short, rebels in general have no other alternative foreign backer mainly due to the shift in the configuration of the Horn politics in the post-Cold War era.

attributed to the contestants themselves, the Eritrean government played some role in its escalation. Many ex-members (phone and online interviews, June 2014) of the Front now believe that the Eritrean government was involved in encouraging the less educated leaders from Wolqait to rebel against the authority of Colonel Tadesse Muluneh and his comrades, who were not seen favorably by the Eritrean officials. On another occasion, Meskerem Atalay was later imprisoned on the orders of Eritrean state officials. His forced, albeit short-lived, elimination from the scene of power brought great wrath upon Tadesse, the major contender, from his enemies, as he was blamed for Meskerem's imprisonment. After a series of mediation efforts by his allies, mainly Dr. Muse, Meskerem was released, only to start another round of crisis within the EPPF.

The creation and even escalation of conflict within the EPPF leadership would not have permanently obviated the possibility of the re-building of a strong organization had it not been for another even more debilitating Eritrean involvement. At the height of the conflict between Meskerem and Tadesse, there were some indications that the majority of the army would side with the latter. Tadesse, an experienced military man, played a critical role in creating the EPPF army, and had earned the respect and trust of the fighters. In his clashes with his contenders, who were seen by others as less experienced and educated, he would no doubt receive more support from below, a scenario in which Tadesse stood to outflank his opponent. These conditions were not, of course, as fertile as those we have seen in the case of Isayas (the leader of the EPLF) and the TPLF leaders of the Dergue's era: in which they eliminated their respective opponents in the manqa and hinfishfish incidents to finally emerge stronger and uncontested (see the fourth chapter). In these latter two cases, the armies and the supporters of the victors were much larger than in the case of the EPPF and Tadesse. However, by rallying supporters both from inside and

outside the EPPF (its numerous diaspora-based supporters), Tadesse could have worked, perhaps with some success, to lay the foundations of building a more coherent organization.

That was not meant to be, however. Tadesse did not earn the affection of the Eritrean officials for his resilience and strong sense of independence. Facing accusations of having connections with the G-15⁹⁸ rebellion against Isayas or, more convincingly, of demanding more independence for the EPPF,⁹⁹ Tadesse was called back to Asmara by Eritrean officials in 2010 and “disappeared” from the field (ex-EPPF member, online interview, June 2014). Some of his allies were also imprisoned or killed. This happened at the height of Tadesse’s power and legitimacy from below: when his contenders were losing as the army was siding with him en masse. He was replaced by Meskerem, now compliant to Eritrean directives, leading once again to another round of commotion within the army. Thus was sealed the fate of the nature of EPPF leadership: by distorting a natural course of events that would strengthen the organization (i.e., by removing from power an independence-seeking strong leader, and ensuring that an obsequious one took his position), Eritrean officials, initiated and re-created conflict between the army and the leadership and within the leadership itself,—thus hamstringing the EPPF.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ The G-15 rebellion, 2001, was the first ever coordinated and outspoken challenge to the authoritarian rule of Isayas by his own former comrades and members of the ruling clique at the time of the rebellion.

⁹⁹ Meazaw, the current EPPF leader, claimed in an ESAT interview (Aug 2011) that Tadesse was imprisoned for “personal issues” which have nothing to do with the EPPF. He, however, consistently refused to disclose what those “personal issues” were.

¹⁰⁰ In the same ESAT interview, Meazaw completely denied any role for the Eritrean government in the weakening of the EPPF. Given his vulnerability to the coercive arms of the government that shelters and controls him, his responses were simply expected. In fact, after denying that Eritrea played a counter-productive role on the EPPF’s struggle, he at the same time stated that those critical of the government should never have presented their censure against it in “this way” (perhaps harshly) and in “such places” (perhaps publicly) which, according to him, is serving the cause of the Woyane. One may sense from his discussions that he was more critical of the delivery than the content of the anti-Eritrean campaign.

The post-Meskerem EPPF leaders, well cognizant of the consequences of dissent, seem to have mastered the art of living safely in Eritrea, doggedly subservient to the wishes of the Eritrean government. According to my informant and their former protégé (phone interview, June 2014), they are fully aware that insurgency against EPRDF can never succeed from Eritrea, but have lived there long enough to put up with the awkward situation they find themselves in. They have grasped the fact that nothing that appears political or military can be done without seeking the advice of the Eritreans first. As one ex-member told me (phone interview, June 2014), when he asked one of the EPPF leaders and another person from a different insurgent group to come out for a casual chat, the leader's reply was, "Yes, but we need to get permission from Fitsum."¹⁰¹ Such insurgent leaders involve officials on every matter that has the potential to be even remotely construed as political.

Another instance whereby Eritrean involvement led to disagreement—this time fragmentation—in an organization relates to the case of Ginbot 7 (G7) and Amhara Democratic Movement. According to an insider (phone interview, June 2014), when the G7 people were strategizing the future struggle in Eritrea, Colonel Alebel Amare, the future leader of an Amhara rebel group, worked with them. He was among the first people to take part in deliberations for initiating a new phase of struggle in Eritrea. While preparations were underway, however, Colonel Fitsum approached Alebel and tried to convince him to stay away from G7 "for it doesn't have a good name." The former persisted in pressuring the latter to form his own organization, promising him abundant funding and favorable conditions. Alebel yielded to the directives of the colonel. Interestingly, Fitsum "gifted" the new organization's ethnic name ("Amhara"), along with its

¹⁰¹ Colonel Fitsum, according to my informants, is the Eritrean official in charge of the affairs of most Ethiopian insurgents.

drafted programme, to Alebel. Upon hearing of this turn of events, G7 leaders acted to isolate the leader of the new organization. Thus was born a new “Ethiopian” rebel group under the shadow of Eritrean military men.

The practice of Eritrean officials of aiding obedient individuals or putting them in positions of power and eliminating actual or potential challengers have not been confined to the EPPF. Many other Ethiopian insurgents based in Eritrea, including TPDM, OLF, and G7 Popular (a G7-affiliated group), have had such experiences. TPDM’s founder and first chair, Fisseha Hailemariam, was executed in late 2000s and another chair put in his place (two ex-EPPF members, phone and online interview, June 2014). Sources concur that Fisseha had angered Eritrean officials because of his strong sense of independence—an independence that cost him his life. The Eritreans played a role in creating the TPDM itself, and did not want to see it controlled by someone not to their liking. Fisseha’s replacement, Molla Asgedom, was widely known for his pliant character during his time as leader of the rebel group. My informants, ex-members of the Eritrean-based rebel groups, argued that the TPDM leadership as a whole is politically incompetent and totally dependent on the Fitsum’s orders and wishes.

Similarly, and as seen above, during the formation of the G7 Popular, disagreement between the lead-organizer, Andargachew Tsige, and newly trained fighters led to the involvement of Eritrean officials, who imposed their will at the expense of the fighters. The Eritrean officials had the upper hand in selecting people to be in positions of power. Members who challenged Andargachew or who showed defiance to Eritrean authority were thrown into Eritrean-administered jails, where, according to later testimonies, they were subjected to brutal treatment (ex-G7 member, interview, Addis Ababa, Aug 2014).

Eritrean government involvement in the internal affairs of the OLF was unheard of until General Kemal Gelchu joined it and then broke away from it, creating his own OLF. According to many informants (e.g., OLF member, interview, Toronto, June 2014), Dawud Ibsa was always favored by Eritrean leaders—his contacts with the latter predating the Ethio-Eritrean war, when the OLF formally shifted its base to Eritrea. Eritrean leaders, therefore, did not look favorably upon Kemal Gelchu’s conflict with Ibsa. His new organization’s rejection of the goal of independence for Oromiya and its espousal of Ethiopian unity, as some observers with close contacts with its leaders state (*Ibid.*), added another dimension to Eritrea’s issues with Kemal. The Eritreans apparently wanted to persist with a discourse of ethnic self-determination, rather than a discourse of unity with other Ethiopians, among the OLF leaders. Kemal was thus denied funding for his organization, despite his takeover of around two-thirds of the OLF’s army (*Ibid.*). As a result, he lost communication with insurgents who had infiltrated into Ethiopia and had been nominally under his command, leading to their dispersal. The Dawud Ibsa-led organization, despite its fragility, was meant to continue on as the “mainstream” OLF in charge of the cause of Oromo self-determination.

The impossibility of cultivating strong insurgent leadership on Eritrean soil has always perplexed observers and members of Ethiopian insurgent groups alike. As one former central committee member of one group put it, “[T]he most important problem is that Eritrea wouldn’t allow you to form avant garde. It takes twenty or thirty years to form it . . . when it is germinating, Eritrea comes and shuffles it up” (Muse Tegegne, *Ethiopiawinet Radio*, 2010). Another ex-fighter (online interview, June 2014) says, “Eritrea never allows the organic emergence of a rebel organization.”

Apart from the critical issue of interfering with the leadership affairs of rebel groups, the involvement of Eritrean officials constrains the mobilizational capacity of oppositions in a number of ways. One of these is through obstructing the groups' full potential for growth. This applies especially to organizations that aspire to become multinational, such as the EPPF. Three ex-members have concurred (two phone and one online interviews, June 2014) on the point that Eritrean officials have deliberately enticed or forced non-Amharas to leave the EPPF and join other organizations that belong to their co-ethnics. Other ethnic organizations have also actually been formed by ex-members of the EPPF on the orders of Eritrean officials: a notable example is the TPDM, which was reportedly formed by gathering Tigrayans, most of whom used to be members of the EPPF. Another mode of Eritrean interference is in the choice of new fighters to join armed groups. While some new volunteers entering onto Eritrean soil for the first time are permitted to select an organization and join it freely, this is not always the case: the will of many others is constrained, both indirectly and directly. One ex-member of an organization claims (phone interview, June 2014) that Eritrean officials meeting volunteers for the first time asked them what ethnic group they belonged to and then presented them with an organization that was deemed "appropriate" to their ethnic background. Many new entrees into Eritrean land are reportedly not aware of the different options available to them; they just come to assess the existing organizations, join one of their choice, and then commence the struggle. They receive orientation from Eritrean officials and are encouraged to join certain groups and not others. While some candidates might find an organization bearing the name "Ethiopian" or one that appeared to be multi-ethnic to be better options, they are not left alone to choose. There are also instances in which people are actually forced to join a specific insurgent group against their will. In one case, a military officer, who left the EPRDF along with the 200 soldiers during Kemal

Gelchus's venture into Eritrea, desired to join the EPPF. However, according to a confidant of Col Abebe Geresu, a close ally of Kemal Gelchu, the said officer was forced to stay with the OLF. When he resisted, he was arrested (phone interview, Feb 2015). According to reports, news of this led to an uproar within the EPPF, after which he was finally released and allowed to join the latter.

This frequent and usually unfavorable interference with the internal workings of rebel organizations has led to a decline of morale of actual and potential fighters. It has been reported that one major factor explaining the low motivation to fight witnessed among many Ethiopian fighters is the belief that as long as they remain in Eritrea, they cannot achieve their goals of “liberating” their country/ethnic group. For many of them, desertion is their most cherished dream; but it is not easily achieved. Many surrender to the Ethiopian government when they are dispatched to the border to stage an operation. For instance, over a hundred EPPF soldiers turned themselves in to Ethiopian authorities protesting the disappearance of Tadesse, losing any hope of struggle. After that incident, restrictions were put on the operations of the EPPF army. The leaders could no longer dispatch fighters for any operation inside Ethiopia whenever they wish to do so (ex-EPPF member, online interview, June 2014). Such restrictions on conducting operations thus illustrate yet another type of Eritrean interference, to the detriment of rebel activity inside Ethiopia. Moreover, when Kemal Gelchu was denied any funding from the Eritrean government, many OLF fighters left the field in despair (OLF member, interview, Toronto, June 2014). The same was true with some of the founders of G7 Popular: after their difficulties at the hands of Eritrean security officers, they ran away from the field and returned to Ethiopia—a country they had abandoned in search of better fortunes. Once there, they provided the government with valuable intelligence, which was later put to effective use against the

organization itself and its leader. Two former fighters who abandoned the field could not emphasize enough what they saw as the destructive interference of the Eritrean government and the sufferings they endured in its custody. “When I gave myself in to the EPRDF, I was expecting to languish in Ethiopian prison, but I knew it would be much better than the Eritrean,” one of them told this author (Addis Ababa, Aug 2014). His experience in Eritrean prison even made him sympathetic to the regime he had abhorred and determined to overthrow only two years previously. “It is much better here,” he stated after abandoning the field. “Ethiopia is marching in a promising path. I am optimistic about its future” (Ibid).

For the Eritrea-based Ethiopian fighters, staying in the field did not necessarily imply motivation to fight, but instead the lack of opportunity to flee. Fleeing from the field, as former fighters explained, was a crime punishable by death. The enforcers usually were Eritrean security officers. Even insurgent leaders did not have the freedom to freely travel. In such scenarios, many ordinary soldiers chose to stay put and see what the future holds. As some soldiers confided to one of my informants (phone interview, Feb 2015), they will stay there “until the dawn arrives.” This despair was more intense for those entering Eritrea for the first time, highly motivated to fight. One such incident occurred in 2005. After Ethiopia’s most controversial and bloody election, numerous members and supporters of the major opposition party, CUD, flocked to Eritrea, fully convinced that bullets, not ballots, were the only way to change government in Ethiopia. They travelled to Eritrea with hope about the potential of insurgency and profound hatred of the EPRDF. Some of them were educated and experienced politicians who could have played prominent roles in re-invigorating the armed struggle. By then, however, the insurgents—most notably the EPPF, the choice of most arrivals—were already weak. The condition in which they found the Front, as well as what they saw as the disparaging intervention of the Eritrean

government, came as a shock. Dejected, some of them left Eritrea (by establishing strategic friendship with the security officials) and re-started activism in the diaspora. At least one them, Captain Zewdu Ayalew, refused the edicts of the Eritreans and was forced out of the organization (ex-EPPF leader, interview, June 2014 and ex-EPPF member, phone interview, Feb 2015).

The apparently negative interference of the Eritrean regime has led over time to the decline of interest in joining insurgencies from outside. As news of the difficulties involved in using Eritrea as a base for insurgency circulated, anti-EPRDF Ethiopians across the world received it with concern. While some quickly gave up, others remained calm, studied the matter further, and submitted complaints to top Eritrean officials. A plethora of negotiations took place with the Eritrean government to work on the basis of “mutual interest and respect.” Many complaints and requests made by Ethiopians to have their comrades released from Eritrean cells and to remove the constraints around insurgent activities have been fielded by prominent activists to the Eritrean government and its representatives down the hierarchy. While more of these efforts are yet underway, and while some appear fairly optimistic (such as the G7 leaders and their affiliates), many former negotiators have given up on President Isayas and turned against him. As one former senior, and once optimistic, negotiator informed me in June 2014 (online interview), “Our comrades asked the Eritrean government to just provide us with an office in Eritrea and nothing else, not even a training camp. The government imprisoned some of them [referring to Col Tadesse of EPPF and Col Abebe Geresu of OLF]. The Eritrean government has no real interest in helping Ethiopian insurgents succeed.” Another similar example is the famous US-based journalist Elias Kifle, one who recently made public his condemnation of President Esayas. Until early 2011, as his frequent articles demonstrated, Elias believed the problem with

the Ethiopian insurgents was an internal one, mainly of leadership. Taking this seriously, he joined the EPPF as a CC member with an apparent intention to revamp the organization. He also travelled to Eritrea several times, holding talks with the Eritrean government officials, including the president. In fact, the interview he and one of his UK-based aides conducted with President Isayas appeared online, going viral immediately after its release. Towards the end of 2011, though, Elias had a change of mind. He condemned the “Shabia,” as the Eritrean government is called by its detractors, with the strongest words possible, holding it accountable for the numerous “crimes” committed in that land against fellow Ethiopians. The EPPF international committee cited in the previous chapter also reached a similar conclusion in its review of the implementation of its recommendations for revamping the Front’s insurgency.

Such damning reports reach the ears of Ethiopians inside Ethiopia, spurring many opposition elements to rule out the possibility of fighting from Eritrea. Many members of legal opposition parties bring this topic up in connection with the possibility of armed struggle in today’s Ethiopia. They argue that Shabiya, the only surviving potential launching pad of bullets into Ethiopia, is in fact not sincerely interested in bringing change in Ethiopia. One of the reasons they cite for choosing the legal, peaceful way of opposition is the predicament over the possibility of insurgency bringing about any meaningful change inside Ethiopia. “If Eritrean soil was favorable to shoot fire from” a spokesperson of an opposition party maintained, “I would have chosen the insurgent way” (interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014).

It, therefore, becomes tempting to conclude that Eritrean intervention has destroyed the mobilizational capacity of Ethiopian rebel movements. The intervention has had serious ramifications for the conditions of rebel organization and mobilization: it has undermined organizational strength (seeing to it that no strong and centralized organization emerges) and

mobilizational potential (depriving the rebel leaders of their capacity to control resources, causing the decline of morale and interest to fight, and restricting movement and operation) of rebel groups.¹⁰²

The fact that Eritrean intervention has managed to profoundly hurt rebel movements has much to do with Eritrean leverage over those rebels. As already mentioned, the enormous degree of control that country has over the insurgents has given it power to inflict damage on the latter's activities. Former EPPF leader Dr Muse once complained, "[W]e wanted shabiya to just grant us land, but it provides us with everything we need and thus fully controls us" (interview, Ethiopiyawinet Radio, Mar 2010). With such a huge leverage over the rebels, the magnitude of the impact of Eritrean interference on the rebels and their organizations is hardly surprising.¹⁰³

The general condition of the Ethiopian rebels inside Eritrea is thus different from the image dictated by the argument about the presence of proxy war between the two neighboring

¹⁰²Needless to say, the Eritrean government denies such charges of negative interference. Isayas Afeworki, the Eritrean President, in an interview to ESAT Channel in Feb 2015, affirmed that his government works "on the basis of common strategic objectives with Ethiopian opposition." He insisted that he is very serious about helping the opposition saying, "we play no games [with the opposition]." Other than such general remarks, he chose to not answer some specific questions asked by the journalists about the problems the Ethiopian opposition is said to be facing in Eritrea.

¹⁰³ Many of the points mentioned in this section about Eritrea's high leverage over rebels and its negative impacts on their organizations and operations have recently been confirmed, after this draft was written, by a senior Eritrean journalist who had been affiliated with the Foreign Service section (i.e., supposedly in service of the cause of Ethiopian rebels) of the Eritrean Ministry of Information until he fled his country few year ago. In his interviews with other journalists (eg., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-DH1vKJLWw>), he cited some interesting examples to corroborate his interventions. Among other things, he revealed how he was being forced by his Eritrean boss to read on a supposedly pro-rebel TV an alleged press release by some Ethiopian rebels, who, as it was later found out, never released any statement of that kind. He also mentioned how video records of rebel assemblies were at times confiscated by Eritrean officials and the rebels had no access to the records of their own meetings to be used for their own purposes. The journalist's boss also reportedly ordered him to not report about or even post the pictures of rebels who are not in good terms with Eritrean officials. The whole picture one gets from his rather long interviews about the conditions of Ethiopian insurgents based in Eritrea is very similar to the one portrayed in this section.

countries. Unlike the Dergue's internal enemies, who were harbored and actively supported by its enemies, the EPRDF's internal opponents have been allowed and helped to survive, but they are rendered militarily ineffective by none other than the external archenemy of the EPRDF itself. By providing the rebels with, among other things, sanctuary, Eritrea has helped the rebels to survive, as the Ethiopian regime, if it wants to extinguish them, has no access to them. But Eritrea has made conditions very difficult for them to effectively launch serious strikes against regime targets in Ethiopia. The outcome is hence quite odd: several existing rebel organizations face little or no threat of annihilation by Ethiopian weaponry, but at the same time have almost no impact in terms of shaking the stability of the Ethiopian regime. Present-day Ethiopian insurgents, in sharp contrast to those of the past, seem to have taken survival in a foreign land as their ultimate goal. Making serious effort to change the order of things in their homeland, something insurgents are normally expected to do, does not seem to be a prominent feature of the organizations.

When we talk of the inconvenience of the Eritrean environment for Ethiopian rebels, the key question is not about Eritrean capacity to help, but rather its intentions to help. Eritrea's deep involvement in the activities of Ethiopian rebel organizations can be used either way. It could, on the one hand, help build strong forces that could significantly challenge the political stability of Ethiopia particularly in the short term. Or it could, on the other hand, actively work towards the weakening of insurgent organization and mobilization with minimal effect on the political stability of its neighbor. The evidences coming out of Eritrea, as seen above, seems to prove the second scenario.

Thus it is important to examine Eritrea's conservative foreign policy orientation towards Ethiopia, for which there seems to be more than one explanation. The first and the major

explanation concerns a factor that one would logically expect to trigger more aggressive policy towards Ethiopia: the Ethio-Eritrean War. This factor actually worked in the opposite direction, making the Eritrean government too cautious—as it tries to avoid calling down a full-fledged invasion upon itself once again. Following their remarkable and sustained struggle against a robust state, which concluded in their favor in 1991, the Eritreans had developed a strong sense of invincibility. This sense of self-confidence—along with aggressive behavior—remained long after they liberated their country from Ethiopian rule. With the invasion of Ethiopia in 1998, they expected to bring the country to its knees and ensure their economic, territorial, and hegemonic aspirations in their relations. But the unexpected backlash and total defeat of Eritrea that followed severely damaged the self-image of the Eritrean regime (Prunier and Ficquet, 2015). As Tareke (2009, 245) rightly notes, “the disastrous defeat in that war has shattered” the Eritrean sense of invincibility. The backlash taught President Isayas that his regime is vulnerable to any attack coming from Ethiopia if an all-out war were to break out a second time. “The Eritrean government,” as Ethiopian analyst Seyoum Tesfay (2016) argues, “knows it is in a much weaker political, economic and diplomatic position than it was during the last war.” Hence, it would be in Isayas’s interest to avoid any action that could lead to the eruption of a full-fledged war with his neighbor. As Horn of Africa expert Jason Mosley affirms (in Gaffey 2016), “The Eritreans are certainly not in a position militarily to want to escalate to a full-scale conflict with Ethiopia.” Consequently, it would not be in the Eritrean ruler’s interest to aid in any serious intensification of anti-EPRDF insurgency inside Ethiopia, by implication calling upon himself a possible Ethiopian march into his palace as a counterattack.¹⁰⁴ This explanation is supported by several

¹⁰⁴Ethiopia has repeatedly warned Eritrea that if it doesn’t desist from supporting “terrorists,” “it will take action.” Apparently, the scale of “terrorism” supported by Eritrea has not been quite alarming in the eyes of Ethiopia so far, which is arguably why it hasn’t taken any military action against its neighbor.

activists in the field and resonates well with the ramifications of the Ethio-Somali relations in the 1970s, as seen above, and its implications for insurgent activities in Ethiopia at the time.

There is still another explanation—secondary in importance—provided by some Ethiopian rebel fighters and ex-members of rebel groups. They argue (e.g., ex-EPPF member, interview, 2014) that the Eritrean regime, despite its rhetoric, has “no real interest in overthrowing the Ethiopian regime”. There could be many reasons for this, but the most-oft mentioned is that the Eritrean regime recognizes the dire consequences of the coming to power of alternative forces to the TPLF. The most likely forces to dominate state politics in Ethiopia in the event of the end of the TPLF rule would be those of Ethiopian nationalist and/or Oromo nationalist background.

According to the calculation of the Eritrean regime, both would likely be detrimental to its interests—possibly more so than the TPLF. The Ethiopian nationalist forces have long resented Eritrean independence and especially the severing of Asab Port from Ethiopia. The Asab issue is deeply imprinted on the psyche of many nationalists who feel strongly nostalgic about it.

Empowering such forces in Ethiopia will obviously endanger the very existence and the territorial integrity of Eritrea at least in the long-term.¹⁰⁵ The TPLF, on the other hand, committed to the full independence of Eritrea along with all its territories (except the few contested ones) and ports.

¹⁰⁵ The fear the Eritrean government harbors towards the ambitions of Ethiopian nationalists has been clear to those who have had close contact with Eritrean officials in charge of Ethiopian rebels. As the Eritrean journalist defector mentioned above clearly put it, “According to the Eritrean government, Ethiopian nationalists who call for Ethiopian unity are a threat to Eritrea's sovereignty.” He also cites one incident that betrays the mentality of the officials in respect to the question at hand. The EPPF once hailed the formation of a coalition among Ethiopian opponents of the regime, and this move by the Front was reported on the Eritrean TV channel mostly in charge of the affairs of Ethiopian rebels. Eritrean officials subsequently strongly castigated the TV staff for doing that. The officials reportedly shouted: “How can you broadcast EPPF’s approval of the formation of a group that doesn't recognize the integrity of the Eritrean state,” referring to elements of Ethiopian nationalists within the newly formed coalition.

There could also be a problem, in the view of Eritrean policymakers, with empowering Oromo nationalist elites in Ethiopia. As Ethiopian critics argue, Eritrea would have little interest in witnessing the establishment of yet another independent republic, a position that the core of Oromo nationalists affiliated with the Oromo Liberation Front are usually associated with. Oromiya is a vast territory (almost one-third of the whole of Ethiopia) with a huge potential of natural wealth. As Briggs (2012, 38) put it, “With its mostly fertile soils, Oromia is the breadbasket of Ethiopia, producing more than half of the nation’s agricultural crop, and it is also home to almost half of its large livestock . . . it is [relatively speaking] rich in minerals, ranging from gold and platinum to iron ore and limestone.” Sharing no borders with Eritrea and ruled possibly by ardent nationalists, an Oromo “republic” would not easily fall into Eritrea’s sphere of influence. As Jalata (2005, 220) notes, “The EPLF sacrifices some of its soldiers for economic benefits that Eritrea needs from Ethiopia. If Oromia is not controlled by Ethiopia, probably there are no such economic benefits.” It would thus be in the best interest of the Eritreans to keep Ethiopia together but to ensure that it is under a pliable ruling clique that does not mind the siphoning off of much-needed resources from different parts of the country, including Oromiya. According to analysts, Eritrea had indeed tried before 1998 to take Ethiopia under its control and benefit from its resources. As Abbink (2003, 221) maintains, “The border conflict is therefore to be seen as a means used to achieve wider ends: regional dominance, maintaining privileged economic relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and weakening of the Ethiopian regime.” Although Isayas turned out to be quite wrong in his calculations, it would still be preferable in his eyes, as two ex-rebel fighters suggested (online and phone interviews, Feb 2015), to negotiate with the TPLF rather than with any hard-core nationalist: this is because the TPLF is not only an organization whose struggle the regime helped initiate and with whom it had decades of

relations, but also one that does not espouse extreme Ethiopian nationalism or Oromo secessionism.

However, negotiating with the TPLF required that it enhanced its bargaining power. This fact, according to my informants (ex-EPPF, phone interview, Jan 2015; ex-OLF, online interview, Aug 2015; and ex-G7 member, interview, Addis Ababa, Aug 2014), lies at the heart of the reason behind Eritrean support for Ethiopian insurgents. Whether one accepts one or the other of the explanations discussed above, the motive of such support could be closely associated with Eritrean interest in boosting its power to bring the Ethiopians to the negotiating table and obtain a good deal out of it, in both economic and political terms. Hence, the Eritrean regime's interest seems to rest neither in genuinely fortifying nor in totally annihilating Ethiopian rebels. The former could lead to either a devastating backlash from the Ethiopian ruling party (the first explanation mentioned above) or the coming to power of potentially more dangerous ruling elites to the long-term interests of Eritrea (the second explanation). In either case, strong support for rebels means committing political suicide. On the other hand, the total eradication of Ethiopian rebels would deprive the Eritrean regime of one of only two means¹⁰⁶ of pressuring Ethiopia to accommodate the hegemonic ambitions of the Eritrean state.

Some Horn analysts have opted to explain Eritrean support for rebels in a different way. Martin Plaut (2014) for instance has argued that the Eritrean regime needs to maintain some sort of hostility between its country and Ethiopia (which is why the regime keeps and supports Ethiopian rebels) to be used to sway Eritreans away from their numerous domestic economic and political problems by blaming them on an external enemy. The “no war no peace” situation

¹⁰⁶The other being its alleged connections with anti-EPRDF Somali insurgents inside Somalia.

between the two countries has also helped the Eritrean regime to further consolidate its power by “suspend[ing] the constitution, suppress[ing] the people’s human rights and impos[ing] a one-man rule” (Ibid.).

The ONLF’s Exceptionality

Perhaps the only exception to the above-mentioned rule—that foreign dependence has wrecked havoc on current Ethiopian insurgents—actually proves it. The ONLF, an offshoot of the WSLF and arguably the only rebel group with visible activities inside present-day Ethiopia, has also been an ally of the Eritrean regime. Eritrea has at different times provided the ONLF with financial, military, and logistical support. While the financial support is debatable, the flow of arms and training of personnel has been steady. Hundreds of ONLF fighters have been trained in Eritrea, which also remains the main supplier of arms to the fighters (Hagman 2014). According to Hagman (2014, 55) “the Eritrean government’s external intelligence wing coordinates logistical arrangements, especially deliveries of weapons and ammunition, and supervises training programs.” However, the support provided to the ONLF is not exceptional. All other rebel groups have also been beneficiaries of Eritrean military and logistical support. The problem for them has been Eritrea’s harmful interventions that have come along with too much dependence on Eritrean support. What then explains ONLF’s relatively more intense and more durable insurgency despite its close connection with Eritrea—in other words, what makes the ONLF case different?

The ONLF’s external relations are somewhat different. According to unverified reports, the Front has other foreign backers, in particular Qatar. In 2008, Ethiopia severed its relations with the Middle East country, announcing that “Ethiopia has displayed considerable patience towards

Qatar's attempts to destabilize our sub-region and, in particular, its hostile behaviour towards Ethiopia” (Afrol News, April 2008). The announcement specifically cited “Qatar’s ‘strong ties’ with Ethiopia’s arch-foe Eritrea, and alleged Qatari support to armed opposition groups within Ethiopia [meaning ONLF] as well as to Islamist insurgents in Somalia.” If proven right, Qatari support could be a special privilege the ONLF managed to gain, perhaps due to the strong efforts of its diaspora-based and Arab-friendly (due to cultural, religious, and historical ties) leaders. Alongside the revamping of the organizational structure of the ONLF in the late 1990s, additional support from another state could be an asset.

Perhaps a more important advantage the ONLF has over other Ethiopian insurgents is its access to alternative sanctuaries outside Ethiopia. Due to clan, religious, and ethnic ties, some Somali territories have been accessible for the ONLF Somali fighters. They have used them as safe havens to hide in and coordinate their activities, and also as conduits to receive support from outside powers (see Wikileaks 2011; Marchal 2004, 138-139). Although they usually experience problems with the frequently intrusive Ethiopian army and its allies inside Somalia, they still manage to acquire lands to hide in since the Ethiopian army can in no way fully control and administer Somalia.¹⁰⁷

Thus, due to the fact that the ONLF managed to diversify its foreign backers as well as diversify its sanctuaries outside Ethiopia, it has managed to escape the tight control Eritrea could have had

¹⁰⁷ ONLF fighters have also managed to infiltrate the Somali Region of Ethiopia and establish bases in the remotest parts therein. This brings them close to the people they claim to fight for and work among them more easily. The other Ethiopian insurgents have hardly had this opportunity. Given the current EPRDF-friendly regional political environment, the insurgents know that they cannot have a safe outlet to the outside world in the event that they are attacked at their base inside Ethiopia. They are hence reluctant to establish any base area inside Ethiopia for a considerable period of time.

over it. By escaping this total control, it has been able to intensify its activities and survive for a longer period. The most important lesson the ONLF took from its predecessor, the WSLF, and which it has more or less successfully put into practice, is to reduce foreign singular dependence as much as possible in order to enhance its staying power. In addition to its at times better organizational condition, the nature of its international connection sets the Front apart from the other insurgents seen above. Stuck in the perilous Eritrean lands, with nowhere else to flee, they have essentially become paper tigers.

The contrast between the ONLF and the OLF is especially remarkable. While the Somali insurgency in post-1974 Ethiopia went, over time, from excessive dependence to relative autonomy, the Oromo insurgency took the reverse path. During the pre-1991 period, the OLF, once fiercely independent from outside intervention, ensured its survival, while some of its rivals (SALF and WSLF) withered away due to that same problem the OLF circumvented. In the post-1991 era, however, the OLF got stuck in the “Eritrean predicament” and hence faded away from Ethiopian lands, while the ONLF, the inheritor of the WSLF, proved relatively resilient by avoiding the OLF’s quandary.

Explaining the Singular Dependence of Rebels on Eritrea

In this last section, I examine the general political context that helps to explain contemporary rebel dependence on Eritrea. The excessive dependence of Ethiopian rebels on a singular foreign backer (Eritrea) can be explained by the steep decline in the number of countries willing to extend support to rebels in the post-1991 era. As I will demonstrate below, the EPRDF, except for the short-lived conflict with the Sudan, has managed to maintain either a diplomatically forged or a coercively imposed friendly regional environment. This is unlike the Dergue before

it, which was surrounded by neighbors that were not only hostile to it but also bent on actively destabilizing it, at least for some time. The change in the politics of the Horn is due largely to the post-Cold War reality of unipolarism, whereby the end of global competitive ideological and military confrontations also meant an end to regional proxy wars. This political change in the Horn region has deprived the current Ethiopian rebels of the possible benefits of the proliferation of multiple inter-state conflicts, along with the attendant diversification of external support for the rebels. Thus, they are highly vulnerable to the dictates of the only country that is willing to harbor them. In this sense—in terms of limiting the options of foreign support for rebels and forcing them to get totally attached to a single country—the post-Cold War change in the regional political configuration has played an *indirect* role in affecting the intensity and durability of insurgency in present day Ethiopia. However, this change in the global and regional politics is just a context that helps us to understand the *direct* reason for the rebels' incapacitation, namely excessive dependence on Eritrea.

With the end of the Cold War and the breakdown of Somalia in 1991, Ethiopia became the most dominant player in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia's neighbors learned through practice that they have no alternative but to accept the hegemony of the heavily US-backed country. Most of them aligned their interests with both the US and Ethiopia in the region, while a few others remained unyielding, and even apparently hostile, but without much willingness or power to significantly destabilize the country. In the end, the post-1991 Horn region became increasingly favorable to the flourishing of an Ethiopia with few security issues regarding its neighbors—in contrast to pre-1991 conditions.

The EPRDF's relations with two of its most significant neighbors, Sudan and Somalia, can be divided into two periods: 1991–98 and 1999–present. It began its relations with Sudan amicably

when it assisted Bashir's government to fight the SPLA. However, Ethiopia became wary of the increasing Islamist rhetoric of the new regime with the National Islamic Front (NIF) at its center. Its relations with Sudan deteriorated after the NIF, in a bid to export its revolution to the neighboring countries, established connections with the EPRDF's local opponents, most notably the OLF and the ONLF. But the relation between the two countries completely broke down with the revelation that some Sudanese individuals were complicit in the attempt at Mubarak's life during his visit to Ethiopia to attend the OAU summit in 1995. Consequently, Ethiopia began its offensive against the Sudan in earnest. It trained and at times (in 1996) fought along with the SPLA against the regime and invited the opponents of the NIF to open bases in Western Ethiopia. It continued with its offensives until it finally created a US-supported coalition of countries—Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda—that fought the Sudanese regime in unison under the name “the front-line states.” Put under immense pressure, the Bashir government was forced to make some concessions to both the SPLA and the IGAD countries. However, its opponents never settled for any negotiation with the regime, demanding its overthrow (de Waal, 2004, 210-211).

It was under these circumstances that the Ethiopia-Eritrean War broke out in 1998 and changed the entire alliance system in the Horn. The Sudan desperately normalized its relations with Ethiopia and has been a strong ally of the EPRDF ever since. It had already expelled OLF contingents even before the normalization of relations with Ethiopia, and has closed its territories to any Ethiopian rebels ever since. Relations with Somalia continued to be uneasy during the EPRDF, as it was during the Dergue. But this time, Ethiopia had much more control over the internal affairs of Somalia. Somalia descended into utter chaos when the Siad Barre regime fell in 1991 as a result of pressure from several internal rebel groups, most notably the United Somali

Congress. Ever since, Somalis have made several attempts to restore order by establishing a semblance of government, but all failed. Clan-based politics and infighting paralyzed the institutional foundations of a political system, recovery from which has repeatedly proven to be futile. Ethiopia has compounded the security problem in Somalia by frequently intervening in the stateless country, in pursuit of its own interests, of which two have been central: first, its desire to defeat enemies that reportedly took refuge in the neighboring country; and second, its intent to indirectly settle its account with Eritrea through supporting opposing factions.

Ethiopian incursion into Somalia started in 1996 in a bid to take out *al-ittihad al-islamiya*, an Islamist force that was posing a security threat in Ethiopia's Region Five. The leader of the fragile "Transitional Government of Somalia" (which existed between 2000 and 2004) lamented "the daily interference of Ethiopia in Somalia's internal affairs" and asserted that "Ethiopia's policy was to undermine the emergence of a strong, united Somalia" (Biles, BBC, July 2003). However, it was in 2006 that Ethiopia officially invaded Somalia to wage a war intended to dislodge Somali forces. The enemy this time was the Union of Islamic Courts, which had been restoring order in the troubled country (Bamfo 2009, 58). Ethiopia invaded the country after the UIC threatened the Ethiopia-backed new Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, formed in 2004 in Kenya under the auspices of the AU, UN, and US. There could be more than one reason behind this massive scale invasion, which involved tens of thousands of Ethiopia forces. One reason—supported by some observers (e.g., Khayre 2014, 209)—was that the invasion took place on behalf of the US, which saw the presence of an Islamist government in Somalia as a serious threat to its interest in the region. However, it is simplistic to consider Ethiopian policymakers as pawns in the hands of the US without interests of their own. It is quite plausible to argue, instead, that the Ethiopian regime was also wary of the growing influence of Eritrea in

Somalia through its support for the UIC and also wanted to make sure that its own local opponents would not find sanctuary under the shadow of a hostile government in Somalia (See Frenkil 2015, 27-28). At any rate, with its almost three-year occupation (2006–09) of the Somalia, Ethiopia brought the stabilizing Somalia back to its chaotic recent past by exacerbating inter-group tensions, especially between Islamists and the Ethiopia-backed government. The security situation in that country is still very bleak, and Somalis, instead of focusing on Ethiopia as a primary target, are now locked in their own intense internal battles. Hence the Ethiopian invasion met the strategic objective of preventing the establishment of a hostile regime in Somalia that could put its security in danger by, among other things, supporting its rebel groups. Hence, Ethiopia's current ruling party's policy towards Somalia has been one of ensuring that any threat coming either from its regional contender, Eritrea, or from any of the local insurgents is effectively redressed. And it has been for the most part successful in this respect,¹⁰⁸ although, in the process, its policies have immensely harmed the security situation in war-torn Somalia.

Lastly, consider Ethiopian relations with the semi-independent Somaliland and Puntland, two state-like entities in northern Somalia. Well-aware of their vulnerability to Ethiopian leverage, the two self-declared states of Somaliland and Puntland have worked closely with the Ethiopian state since their formation in 1991 and 1998, respectively. Ethiopia has warm relations with Somaliland. It has, among other things, used Berbera Port to receive imports, established banks near the border of the two countries, established regular Ethiopian Airlines flight between Addis and Hargeisa, and opened a Consulate General and trade mission in Hargeisa (Hagman 2014,

¹⁰⁸“For the most part” because some ONLF elements have still managed to take parts of Somalia as refuge. But even then, the threat from the ONLF is not significantly destabilizing for Ethiopia, and the ONLF's safe haven inside Somalia has never been entirely “safe” because of the increasingly strong presence of Ethiopian forces and its allies inside Somalia.

52). Although not as solid, Ethiopia's relationship with Puntland is also amicable. The two have strong business relations that culminated in 2015 in the "signing of a new custom centre in the border towns where the business activities between the two sides will be regulated and allow free movement of goods and business people to and from the border" (Goobjoog News, Jan 2015). They had signed before that, in 2010, "an all-encompassing Memorandum of Understanding . . . and established a Joint Intelligence and Security Committee" (Hagman 2014, 53). Both Somaliland and Puntland have expectedly worked actively to secure the interests of Ethiopia in the region, most importantly by helping it defeat its armed opponents.

All in all, Ethiopia's post-1991 relations with its neighbors have not been damaging to the interests of the ruling party. Resulting mainly from the change in the global alliance of powers in the post-Cold War period, countries surrounding Ethiopia—with the notable exception of Eritrea—did not find themselves in a position to antagonize the country. Even if political actors in both the Sudan and Somalia at some point saw in Ethiopia an adversary, it was not in their interest to either escalate or extend the antagonism with their US-backed neighbor. Somalia, in addition, collapsed out of its internal problems and made itself quite vulnerable in the face of Ethiopian might. In the absence of a reliable global power to support them in their adversarial foreign policies, Ethiopia's neighbors thus either toned down their opposition to or completely normalized their relations with the Ethiopian regime.

Hence, predictably, one notable outcome of the post-Cold War creation of a generally friendly regional atmosphere to the regime in Ethiopia was the sharp decline in the number of countries extending support to Ethiopian insurgents. As I mentioned earlier in this section, the overall shift in the global and regional politics *does* explain why Ethiopian insurgents have currently been attached to just Eritrea. It also explains why the insurgents are not in a position to get support

from other (neighboring) countries, as we saw elsewhere. However, this phenomenon does *not* explain how and why Eritrea's multifaceted support for Ethiopian rebels has not led to the rise of insurgency inside Ethiopia. It is precisely this factor—the high Eritrean leverage over the insurgents it supports but does not want to render too strong—that can *directly* explain, as I have shown, in addition to the weak organizational capacity of the rebels themselves, the sharp reduction of violence in present-day Ethiopia.

Conclusions

Insurgency in robust authoritarian states takes diverse forms and scales that depend little on the level of oppression/repression, exploitation, or destitution prevalent in such societies. The degree of insurgency in such countries is rarely a function of what the state does¹⁰⁹ to its subjects or what they think. There is no denying that regime-induced grievance serves as a *sine qua non* for the emergence of some kind of collective violence, but it cannot explain the wide variation in the scale of violence generated by more or less similar levels/types of grievance prevalent in different societies. As this dissertation has tried to show, this variation is instead attributable to the differences in nature of the internal make-up of rebel groups and of their international connections, factors that have usually been either neglected or simplified in the existing literature on collective violence/insurgency.

One important argument advanced in this study is that insurgent groups vary widely in their organizational capacity, resulting in a resounding variance in the intensity and durability of the insurgency they wage against authoritarian rule. Those with strong organizational capacity (i.e., cohesive leadership) and tight and centralized command structure are better able to produce disciplined and skilled fighters, effectively coordinate and exploit existing resources, and thus conduct efficient battles against the state or other non-state contenders. Their capacity in this respect would render their wars with a robust state intense and long-lasting.

¹⁰⁹ While states do matter in the study of insurgency in general, some non-state factors, however, as argued in this study, limit their capacity in achieving their goals, which is why we witness divergence in the level of insurgency when state-level variables are more or less held constant. The task of this dissertation has been to investigate those factors that explain this variation. See footnote 9 for more elaboration on these issues.

On the contrary, insurgents with weak organizational capacity—divided leadership and loose organizational structure—fail to effectively exploit, mobilize, and coordinate their constituencies, resources, and insurgent activities. Thus, they become vulnerable to the repression of their enemies, and are as a result dismantled shortly or forced to keep dragging on their wars with lower intensity. Thus, the organizational capacity of rebel groups is of utmost importance in the quest to understand the durability and intensity of insurgency.

If organizational capacity is of such huge significance, then, why don't all rebel groups work towards its enhancement and equally succeed in that respect? Enhancing organizational capacity, as this research has also demonstrated, is not always easy for rebel leaders because of factors beyond their immediate control, even though it is true that their choices and decisions also matter. Structural and institutional factors such as the presence or absence of an already-constructed semblance of collective identity among the people they operate in, and the pre-existence or not of shared institutional belonging of elites, are as important as more voluntarist factors such as the choices/decisions elites make with regards to manipulating the existing sense of collective identity and form a coherent organization, and the deployment or not of disciplining/enforcement mechanisms in the group. All these factors are consequential in solidifying or weakening rebel organizations.

While the internal make-up of an insurgent group explains much about the scale of insurgency that a rebel group wages, it cannot explain all of it. The nature of its foreign relations is important as well. In contrast to the simplified account of the importance of foreign support in the existing literature on collective violence, this study emphasized two additional factors and thus complicated the significance of international factors to the topic at hand. The study has argued that the significance of foreign support is dependent on the degree of leverage the foreign

state has over the insurgency it supports, and also on the foreign policy orientation of that state. With aggressive foreign policy of the foreign state, foreign support works quite well to escalate insurgency, while in the context of a conservative foreign policy coupled with a high degree of leverage, foreign support does not amount to any increase in the scale of insurgency. One important lesson of this finding is that we need to be cautious not to conflate foreign support for rebels with foreign interest to destabilize the country that the rebels fight. Here, foreign state interest is of crucial importance. And this foreign state interest makes a difference in the scale of insurgency when there is a high degree of foreign leverage over the rebels that conduct the insurgency. With low foreign leverage, foreign support is unconditionally of great importance in escalating insurgency. It thus seems plausible to assert that the existing literature that emphasizes foreign support in explaining intensity of insurgency deals exclusively either with cases of rebels supported by aggressive foreign states with high leverage over their rebel-allies or with cases of rebels backed by foreign states without much leverage over the rebels. Scholars have largely neglected the consequences for rebels of being controlled by foreign states with conservative foreign policy agendas.

In addition, this study has also established a relationship between foreign support and organizational capacity of rebel groups. When it works, foreign support is usually helpful in initiating and briefly escalating insurgency. It does not, as I argue here, in contrast to much of the literature, guarantee the long-term survival of rebel movements, which is primarily a function of the rebels' organizational capacity. Durability of insurgency is highly correlated with the strength of rebel organizations. In fact, in some cases, rebels with strong organizational capacity may not even need foreign support to initiate and escalate their activities; they may be able to sufficiently exploit the resources within their grasp—however meagre—in order to survive and

thrive. But the flow of support to rebels from outside always greatly benefits any rebel group in terms of increasing the intensity of its insurgency. These findings contradict the existing literature that assigns great significance to foreign support in ensuring the durability of insurgency. It does not, however, necessarily mean that the findings in this research effectively challenge the whole thesis established in the literature, as much as it implies that the evidence provided here challenges the universal application of the foreign support-related arguments scholars have advanced so far.

This dissertation has illustrated the practical manifestations of the above arguments through several examples of insurgent movement from East Africa. The insurgent groups discussed have varied widely in the scale of insurgency they waged. Some were caught up in a protracted and stiff battle with their contenders, resulting in massive scale collective violence and substantial political instability. Others fought highly intense wars (with high casualties) but soon declined and were eclipsed, leading to effective normalization and stability in their areas of operation. Still others managed to prolong their activities among their constituencies but could not escalate the fight to meaningfully destabilize the regime and its political order. Finally, many others fared worst on both accounts of intensity and durability. They became involved in ephemeral skirmishes with government forces and, while still surviving as organizations, are for all intents and purposes non-existent operationally. The vast array of diversity in the scale of insurgency, as seen in this dissertation, has less to do with, for instance, the prevalence of grievance among the people, or the degree of repression meted out by the state, or the many other explanations provided in the literature to account for collective violence. It has much to do with the organizational capacity of rebel groups and the nature of their international relations.

The research has thus relocated scholarly attention accorded to state repressive capabilities on the one hand and societal grievances on the other in order to explain levels of insurgency. I have instead focused on rebel groups and their foreign backers. The nature of the relationship among rebel elites, on the one hand, and elites and their followers, on the other within the rebel group; and the nature of the relationship between rebel elites and their foreign backers, if any, and what those backers want—these are of critical importance in influencing the scale of insurgency in a given context.

Bibliography

Aalen, Lovise. 2002. *Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: the Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000*. Report, Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute Development Studies and Human Rights.

Aalen, Lovise, and Kjetil Tronvoll. 2009. "The End of Democracy? Curtailing Political and Civil Rights in Ethiopia." *Review of African Political Economy* 36 (120): 193-207.

Abbay, Alemseged. 1998. *Identity Jilted or Re-imagining Identity: the Divergent Paths of the Eritrean & Tigrayan Nationalist Struggles*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press.

Abbink, Jon. 2002. "Paradoxes of Power and Culture in an Old Periphery: Surma, 1974-98." In *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After*, eds. Wendy James et. al. Oxford: James Currey, 155-172.

_____. 2003a. "Ethiopia-Eritrea: Proxy Wars and Prospects of Peace in the Horn of Africa." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21(3): 408-425.

_____. 2003b. "Badme and the Ethio-Eritrean Border: The Challenge of Demarcation in the Post-War Period." *Africa* 58(2): 219-231.

_____. 2006a. "Discomfiture of Democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and its Aftermath." *African Affairs* 105(419): 173-199.

_____. 2006b. "Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia: Some Problems and Prospects of Regional Federalism." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 24(3): 389- 413.

Abbink, Jon., and Tobias Hagmann, eds. 2013. *Reconfiguring Ethiopia: The Politics of Authoritarian Reform*. London and New York: Routledge.

Abdullahi, Abdi M. 2007. "The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF): The Dilemma of Its Struggle in Ethiopia." *Review of African Political Economy* 34(113): 556-562.

Afeworki, Isayas. 2015. ESAT Interview. February 14.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by_zN4aEMyY.

Afrol News. 2008. "Ethiopia Breaks Diplomatic Ties with Qatar." April 22. <http://www.afrol.com/articles/28683>.

Ahuja, Amit, and Ashutosh Varshney. 2005. "Antecedent Nationhood, Subsequent Statehood: Explaining the Success of Indian Federalism." In *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, eds. Phillip Roeder and Donald Rothchild. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 241–264.

Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo. 2012. "Coercive Capacity and the Prospects for Democratization." *Comparative Politics* 44 (2): 151-169.

Alem, Yonas, et. al. 2014. "The Persistence of Subjective Poverty in Urban Ethiopia." *World Development* 56: 51–61.

Alexander, Marcus, and Matthew Harding. 2006. "Is Poverty to Blame for Civil War? New Evidence from Nonlinear Fixed Effects Estimation." Presented at the Econometric Society World Congress, London.

Ali, Mohammed. 1996. *Ethnicity, Politics, and Society in Northeast Africa: Conflict and Social Change*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

Anckar, Carsten. 2008. "On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11(5): 389-401.

Andersen, David et. al. 2014. "State Capacity and Political Regime Stability." *Democratization* 21(7): 1305– 1325.

Arriola, Leonardo R. 2013. "Protesting and Policing in a Multiethnic Authoritarian State: Evidence from Ethiopia." *Comparative Politics* 45(2): 147-168.

Asaye, Akele. 2010. በድልና በመስዋዕትነት የደመቀው የኢህዴድ ሠራዊት ታሪክ ከ1973 - 1983 ዓ.ም. n.p.d.

Ayele, Fantahun. 2014. *The Ethiopian Army: From Victory to Collapse, 1977-1991*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Bamfo, Napoleon A. 2010. "Ethiopia's Invasion of Somalia in 2006: Motives and Lessons Learned." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 4(2): 055-065.

Bandyopadhyay, Sanghamitra and Elliott Green. 2011. "Nation-Building and Conflict in Modern Africa." LSE STICERD Research Paper, No. EOPP026. SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1935772>.

Beck C. J. 2008. "The Contribution of Social Movement Theory to Understanding Terrorism." *Sociology Compass* 2 (5): 1565-1581.

Bellin, Eva. 2004. "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East." *Comparative Politics* 36 (2): 139-157.

Bereketeab, Redie. 2016. *Revisiting the Eritrean National Liberation Movement, 1961-91*. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press.

Berhe, Aregawi. 2008. "A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology and Mobilization in Ethiopia", PhD diss. Vrije Universiteit.

Berhe, Aregawi, and Aregash Adane. 2010. VOA interview. <http://ecadforum.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Aregash-adane.mp3>.

Bertrand, Jacques, and Andre Laliberte. 2010. "Introduction." In *Multination States in Asia: Accommodation or Resistance*, eds. Jacques Bertrand and Andre Laliberte. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-29.

Biedemariam, Amanuel. 2010. "Ethiopia: A Defining Moment for the People of Tigray." *ECADF*. December 4. <http://ecadforum.com/2010/12/04/ethiopia-a-defining-moment-for-the-people-of-tigray/>

Bihonegn, Tesfa. 2015. "The House of Federation: the Practice and Limits of Federalism in Ethiopia's Second Federal Chamber." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 9(3): 394-411.

Biles, Peter. 2003. "Somali Leader Lambasts Ethiopia." BBC News, July 12. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3061449.stm>.

- Binningsbø, Helga M. 2005. "Consociational Democracy and Postconflict Peace: Will Power-Sharing Institutions Increase the Probability of lasting peace After Civil War?" Presented at the 13th National Conference in Political Science, Hurdalsjøen.
- Bogaards, Matthijs. 2005. "Power-sharing in South Africa: The ANC as a Consociational Party?" In *From Power-Sharing to Democracy: Post-Conflict Institutions in Ethnically Divided Societies*, eds. Sidney John and Roderick Noel. Toronto: McGill University Press, 164–183.
- Bosi, Lorenzo, and Giugni, Marco 2012. "The Study of the Consequences of Armed Groups: Lessons from the Social Movement Literature." *Mobilization: An International Journal* 17(1): 85–98.
- Branch, Adam, and Zachariah Mampilly. 2015. *Africa Uprising: Popular Protest and Political Change*. London: Zed Books.
- Briggs, Philip. 2012. *Ethiopia*. UK: Bradt Travel Guides Ltd.
- Buechler, Steven. 2000. *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism: The Political Economy and Cultural Construction of Social Activism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Buhaug, Halvard et. al. 2013. "Square Pegs in Round Holes: Inequalities, Grievances, and Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly* 58(2): 1-14.
- Bulcha, Mekuria. 1997. "The Politics of Linguistic Homogenization in Ethiopia and the Conflict over the Status of 'AfaanOromoo.'" *African Affairs*. 96(384): 325-352.
- Byman, et.al. 2001. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. California: RAND.
- Cavanaugh, Kathleen A. 2007. "Interpretations of Political Violence in Ethnically Divided Soceities." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9(2): 33-54.
- Central Statistical Agency (CSA). 1984 and 2007. *Population and Housing Census Report-Country*. Ethiopia: CSA.
- Chaliand, Gerrard. 1980. "The Guerilla Struggle." In *Behind the War in Eritrea*, eds. Basil Davidson et.al. London: Spokesman Publishers, 51-53.

Chanie, Paulos. 1998. "The Rise of Politicized Ethnicity among the Oromo in Ethiopia." In *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa*, eds. Mohamed Salih and John Markakis. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 95-107.

Choudhry, Sujit. 2008. "Bridging Comparative Politics and Comparative Constitutional Law: Constitutional Design for Divided Societies." In *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3-41.

Clapham, Christopher. 1989. *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 2002. "Controlling Space in Ethiopia." In *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, eds. Wendy James et. al. Oxford: James Currey, 9-30.

_____. 2017. *The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay*. London: Hurst & Company.

Cliff, Lionel, and Basil Davidson. 1988. *The Long Struggle of Eritrea for Independence and Collective Peace*. Trenton, N.J.: Red Sea Press.

Clarke, Colin P. 2015. *Terrorism, Inc. The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency, and Irregular Warfare*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International.

Cohen, Gideon. 2000. "Language and Ethnic Boundaries: Perceptions of Identity Expressed through Attitudes towards the Use of Language Education in Southern Ethiopia." *Northeast African Studies* 7(3): 189-206.

_____. 2006. "The Development of Regional and Local Languages in Ethiopia's Federal System." In *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, eds. David Turton. Oxford: James Currey, 165-180.

Collier, Paul. 2000b. "Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44(6): 839-853.

Collier, P, and Anke Hoeffler. 1998. "On Economic Causes of Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers* 50(4): 563-573.

_____ 2001. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Policy Research Working Paper* 2355, Washington, DC: World Bank.

_____ 2004. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56(4): 563–95.

_____ 2007. "Civil War." In *Handbook of Defense Economics*, eds. Tod Sandler and Keith Hartley. Elsevier, Amsterdam: 712–739.

Collier, Paul, et. al. 2004. "On the Duration of Civil War." *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 253–273.

_____ 2008. "Post-conflict Risks." *Journal of Peace Research* 45(4): 461–478.

Connable, Ben, and Martin Libicki. 2010. *How Insurgencies End*. California: RAND.

Connell, Dan. 1993. *Against all Odds: A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution*. Trenton: Red Sea Press.

Connell, Dan. 2001. "Inside the EPLF: the Origins of the 'People's Party' & its Role in the Liberation of Eritrea." *Review of African Political Economy* 28(89): 345–364.

Correlates of War. n.d. "COW Intra-State War Data, 1816–1997 (v3.0)." [http://cow.la.psu.edu/cow2%20data/WarData/IntraState/Intra-State%20War%20Format%20\(V%203-0\).htm](http://cow.la.psu.edu/cow2%20data/WarData/IntraState/Intra-State%20War%20Format%20(V%203-0).htm).

Davenport, Christian. 2007a. "State Repression and Political Order." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 1–23.

_____ 2007b. *State Repression and the Domestic Democratic Peace*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Debray, Regis. 1967. *Revolution in the Revolution?* New York: Grove Press.

der Beken, Christophe V. 2012. *Unity in Diversity: Federalism as a Mechanism to Accommodate Ethnic Diversity: The Case of Ethiopia*. Zurich: LIT Verlag.

de Waal, Alex. 1991. *Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia*. New York: Human Rights Watch.

_____. 1992. "Ethiopia: Transition to What?" *World Policy Journal* 9 (4): 719–737.

_____. 1994. "Rethinking Ethiopia." In *The Horn of Africa*, ed. Charles Gurdon. New York: St Martin's Press, 25-46.

de Waal, Alex. 2004. "The Politics of Destabilization in the Horn, 1989–2001." In *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Alex de Waal. London: Hurst, 182-230.

Easterly, William, and Laura Freschi. 2010. "Why Are We Supporting Repression in Ethiopia?" *The New York Review of Books*. <http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2010/11/15/why-are-we-supporting-repression-ethiopia/>

Elbadawi, Ibrahim, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2000. "Why are There So Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent conflict." *Journal of African Economies* 9(3): 244-269.

Erlich, Haggai. 1994. *Ethiopia and the Middle East*. London: Lynne Rienner.

Esberg, Jane. 2015. "Democracy's Effect on Terrorist Organizations: Regime Type and Armed Group Behavior in Chile." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25(2): 243-267.

Ethiopian People Patriotic Front. 2005. "EPPF's Vision." n.p.d.

_____. 2007. "Report." n.p.d.

External Representatives of the EPPF leadership. 2010. "የኢትዮጵያ ህዝብ አርበኞች ግንባር (ኢህአግ) ማዕከላዊ ኮሚቴ አባላትና በዓለም ዙሪያ የሚገኙ ቻፕተሮች ጉባኤ ውሳኔ." August 1. <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/2010/eppf-chapters-resolution-1-august-2010.pdf>

Fajnzylber, Pablo, Daniel Lederman and Norman Loayza. 2002. "Inequality and Violent Crime." *Journal of Law and Economics* 44(1): 1-39.

Fearon, James D. 2004. Why Do Some Civil Wars Last so Much Longer than Others? *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 275-301.

Fearon, James, and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1):75-90.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution. 1995.
<http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf>

Fessha, Yonatan T. 2010. *Ethnic Diversity and Federalism: Constitution-Making in South Africa and Ethiopia*. London: Routledge.

Feyissa, Dereje. 2006. "The Experience of Gambella Regional State." In *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, ed. David Turton. Oxford: James Currey, 208–233.

Finfinne Tribune. 2015. "Govt Tells ODF's Delegation Led by Ob. LeencoLata to Leave Ethiopia." March 22. <http://finfinnetribune.com/Gadaa/2015/03/govt-tells-odfs-delegation-led-by-ob-leenco-lata-to-leave-ethiopia-delegation-back-to-europe/>

Fisseha, Assefa. 2006. "Theory versus Practice in the Implementation of Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism." In *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, ed. David Turton, Oxford: James Currey, 131-164.

Frank, M. 2009. "Effects of Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Holding Together or Splitting Apart?" University of Toronto/University of Friburg, Summer Institute Guadalajara, Ethnic Diversity and DemocracyProject.

Freedom House Survey Team. 1994. *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1993-1994*. New York: Freedom House.

Frenkil, Eric. 2015. "The Lion Comes to Mogadishu: Why Ethiopia Invaded Somalia in 2006." https://www.academia.edu/14081029/The_Lion_Comes_to_Mogadishu_Why_Ethiopia_Invaded_Somalia_in_2006.

Gaffey, Conor. 2016. "Why Eritrea's Border with Ethiopia is a Conflict Zone." *Newsweek*. June 13. <http://www.newsweek.com/why-eritrea-border-ethiopia-conflict-zone-469739>.

Gates, Scott. 2001. "Empirically Assessing the Causes of Civil War." Mimeo, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo.

_____. 2002. "Recruitment and Allegiance: The Microfoundations of Rebellion." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (1): 111-130.

Gebremedhin, Senay. 2017. "Discussion with Journalist Senay Gebremdhin about OLF, G7 and other Hostages in Eritrea." March 25. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-DH1vKJLWw>.

Gebremedhin, Tesfaye A., and Stephen Whelan. 2007. "Prices and Poverty in Urban Ethiopia." *Journal of African Economies* 17(1): 1-33.

Getu, Meazaw. 2011. ESAT Exclusive interview. parts 1, 2 and 3.
<https://www.ethiotube.net/video/.../esat-exclusive-eppf-arbegnoch-ginbar>

Gilkes, Patrick. 1975. *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*. London: Julian Friedman Publishers.

Global Security. 1997. "Is Sudan Terrorism's New Mecca?"
<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1997/Littleton.htm>.

Goobjog News. 2015. "Puntland and Ethiopia Lay Foundation Stone of New Custom at the Border." January 13. <http://goobjoog.com/english/puntland-and-ethiopia-lay-foundation-stone-of-new-custom-at-the-border/>

Goodwin, Jeff. 2012. "Introduction to a Special Issue on Political Violence and Terrorism: Political Violence as Contentious Politics." *Mobilization: An International Journal* 17(1): 1-5.

Gottesman, Les. 1998. *To Fight and Learn: The Praxis and Promise of Literacy in Eritrea's Independence War*. Trenton: Red Sea Press.

Griffin, Keith. 1992. *The Economy of Ethiopia*. Basingstoke: PalgraveMacmillan.

Gudina, Merera. 2001. "The Elite and the Quest for Peace, Democracy and Development in Ethiopia: Lessons to be learnt." Presented at the International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

_____. 2003. *Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy, 1960-2000*. Maastricht: Shaker Publications.

_____. 2007. "Ethnicity, Democratisation and Decentralization in Ethiopia: The Case of Oromia." *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* 23(1): 81-106.

_____. 2011. "Elections and Democratization in Ethiopia, 1991–2010." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5(4): 664-680.

Gurr, Ted. 1968. "Psychological Factors in Civil Violence." *World Politics* 20(2): 245-278.

Guutama, Ibsa. 2003. *Prisoner of Conscience*. New York: Gubirmans.

Hackenesch, Christine. 2011. "Competing for Development? The European Union and China in Ethiopia." Discussion Paper, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

Hagmann, Tobias. 2012. "Supporting Stability, Abetting Repression." *International Herald Tribune*. July 12. <https://www.questia.com/read/1P2-36288303/supporting-stability-abetting-repression>.

_____. 2013a. "The Return of Garrison Rule in the Ethiopian Ogaden, 2006 to 2012." Presented at the Center for African Studies, University of Florida at Gainesville.

_____. 2013b. "A Short History of Political and Mass Violence in Ethiopia's Somali Region, ca. 1960 to 2012." Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung (DSF) Research Paper.

_____. 2013c. "'We Live in the Dark Age': Accounts of State-sponsored Violence and Prospects for Transitional Justice in the Ethiopian Ogaden." Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung (DSF) Research Paper.

_____. 2014. *Talking Peace in the Ogaden: The Search for an End to Conflict in the Somali Regional State in Ethiopia*. Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute (RVI) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/538838994.html>.

Haile, Semere. 1987. "The Origins and Demise of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Federation." *Issue: Quarterly Journal of Opinion* 15: 9-17.

Hailemariam, Mengistu. 2010. "Collected Speeches." February 5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68FxzMZe2BU>.

Hailu, Asmamaw. 2010. *Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Army, 1972-78* (Amharic). N.p.d.

Halliday, Fred, and Maxine Molyneux. 1982. *The Ethiopian Revolution*. London: New Left Books.

Hameso, Seyoum, and Mohammed Hassen. 2006. *Arrested Development in Ethiopia: Essays on Underdevelopment, Democracy, and Self-determination*. Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press.

Harbeson, John W. 1996. "Elections and Democratization in Post-Mengistu Ethiopia." Report Prepared for the US Agency for International Development Project on Elections in War-torn Societies, September.

Hartzel CA, and Hoddie M. 2007. *Crafting Peace: Power-sharing Institutions and the Negotiated Settlement of Civil Wars*. State College, PA: Penn State University Press.

Hassen, Mohammed. 1998. "The Development of Oromo Nationalism." In *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, eds. Paul Baxter et.al., Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 67-80.

Healy, Sally. 1983. "The Changing Idiom of Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa." In *Nationalism and Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa*, ed. I.M. Lewis, London: Ithaca Press, 93-109.

Hegre, Håvard et. al. 2001. "Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816–1992." *American Political Science Review* 95(1): 33–48.

Hendrix, Cullen S. 2010. "Measuring State Capacity: Theoretical and Empirical Implications for the Study of Civil Conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 47(3): 273-285.

Henze, Paul. 1985. *Rebels and Separatists in Ethiopia: Regional Resistance to a Marxist Regime*. California: RAND.

_____. 1989. *Contrasts in African Development: The Economies of Kenya and Ethiopia, 1975-84*. California: RAND.

Hibbs, Douglas A. 1973. *Mass Political Violence*. New York: Wiley.

Hoddie, Matthew, and Caroline Hartzel. 2003. "Civil War Settlements and the Implementation of Military Power Sharing Arrangements." *Journal of Peace Research* 40(3): 303-320.

Horowitz, Donald. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Human Rights Watch. 1998. *Global Trade Local Impact: Arms Transfers to all Sides in the Civil War in Sudan*. August 1. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6a8500.html>.

_____. 1999. *Ethiopia: Human Rights Developments*. World Report. <https://pantheon.hrw.org/legacy/worldreport99/africa/ethiopia.html>.

_____. 2005a. *Suppressing Dissent: Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in Ethiopia's Oromia Region*. May 9. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/05/09/suppressing-dissent/human-rights-abuses-and-political-repression-ethiopias-romia>.

_____. 2005b. *Ethiopia: Crimes Against Humanity in Gambella Region*. March 23. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/03/23/ethiopia-crimes-against-humanity-gambella-region>.

_____. 2008. *Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State*. June 12. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/06/12/collective-punishment/war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-ogaden-area-ethiopias>.

_____. 2010. *Development without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia*. October 19. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/10/19/development-without-freedom/how-aid-underwrites-repression-ethiopia>

_____. 2012. *Ethiopia: Events of 2011*. World Report. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/ethiopia>.

_____. 2016. *Ethiopia: Protest Crackdown Killed Hundreds*. June 15. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/15/ethiopia-protest-crackdown-killed-hundreds>.

_____. 2017. *Ethiopia: Year of Brutality, Restrictions: Restore Rights, Address Grievances*. January 12. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/01/12/ethiopia-year-brutality-restrictions>.

Ibrahim, Solava. 2015. "Frustrated Youth and Failed Democracy: The Dynamics of Well-being, Aspirations and Politics in Egypt." Presented at the King's College, London.

International Crisis Group. 2008. *Beyond the Fragile Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting New War*. Nairobi: International Crisis Group.

_____. 2009. *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents*. Nairobi: International Crisis Group.

_____. 2013. *Ethiopia: Prospects for Peace in Ogaden*. Nairobi: International Crisis Group.

International Monetary Fund. 2012. "The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: 2012 Article IV Consultation—Staff Report; Public Information Notice on the Executive Board Discussion; Staff Statement; and Statement by the Executive Director for Ethiopia." October 18. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2012/cr12287.pdf>.

_____. 2013. "World Economic Outlook." <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/02/weodata/index.aspx>.

Iyob, Ruth. 1995. *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence: Domination, Resistance, Nationalism, 1941-93*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jalata, Asafa. 1993. "The Oromo, Change and Continuity in Ethiopian Colonial Politics." *Journal of Oromo Studies* 1(1): 17-27.

_____. 2005. *Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-2004*. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press.

_____. 2010. *Contending Nationalisms of Oromia and Ethiopia: Struggling for Statehood, Sovereignty, and Multinational Democracy*, Binghamton. New York: Global Academic Publishing, Binghamton University, State University of New York.

_____. 2012. *Fighting against the Injustice of the State and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

_____. 2013. "The Oromo, Gadaa/Siqqee and the Liberation of Ethiopian Colonial Subjects." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 9(4): 277-295.

Johnston, Patrick. 2008. "The Geography of Insurgent Organization and its Consequences for Civil Wars: Evidence from Liberia and Sierra Leone." *Security Studies* 17(1): 107–137.

Joireman, Sandra. 2003. *Nationalism and Political Identity*. London: Continuum.

Kassam, Aneesa. 2003. "NGOs, Social Movements, and Development: A Case Study from the Ethiopian Regional State of Oromia." *Journal of Oromo Studies* 10(1): 1-30.

Kaufmann, Chaim. 1996. "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Conflict." *International Security* 20(4): 136–175.

Keen, David. 2012. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *International Affairs* 88(4): 757-777.

Kefale, Asnake. 2013. *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: A Comparative Regional Study*. London: Routledge.

_____. 2004. "Federalism: Some Trends of Ethnic Conflicts and their Management in Ethiopia." In *The Quest for Peace in Africa*, ed. Alfred G. Nhema. Utrecht: International Books, 51–72.

Keller, Edmond J. 1988. *Revolutionary Ethiopia: from Empire to People's Republic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Keller, Edmond, and LahraSmith. 2005. "Obstacles to Implementing Territorial Decentralization: The First Decade of Ethiopian Federalism." In *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, eds. Phillip Roeder and Donald Rothchild. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 265-291.

Keskis, Leul, and Demis Belete. 2010. Paltalk, Qale Room interview. July 18. <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/audio/demis-and-leul-interview-qale-room-18-july2010-edited.mp3>.

Khayre Ahmed. 2014. "Self-Defense, Intervention by Invitation, or Proxy War? The Legality of the 2006 Ethiopian Invasion of Somalia." *African Journal of International Comparative Law* 22(2): 208-233.

Kymlicka, Will. 2001. *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Laitin, David D., and Said S. Samatar. 1987. *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Lata, Lencoo. 2014. OMN interview, parts 1 and 2 June 28. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldqCdSRy6Ss><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEtdt1MOdQ0>.

Lefort, Renè. 1983. *Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution?* London: Zed Press.

Legum, Colin, and Bill Lee. 1979. *The Horn of Africa in Continuing Crisis*. New York: Africana Publications.

Leigh, Ryan M. 2010. "Thinking the Unthinkable: Civil War in Afghanistan." Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Lewis, Herbert S. 1993. "Oromo Political Culture and Ethiopia's Future." Presented at the Symposium on the Making of a New Ethiopian Constitution, Addis Ababa.

_____. 1998. "The Development of Oromo Political Consciousness from 1958 to 1994." In *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, eds. Paul Baxter et.al. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 37-47.

Lewis, I. M. 1961. *A Pastoral Democracy: A Study of Pastoralism and Politics Among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*. London: James Currey.

_____. 1994. *Blood and Bone: The Call of Kinship in Somali Society*. Lawrenceville NJ: Red Sea Press.

Lichbach, Mark I. 1987. "Deterrence or Escalation? The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31(2):266-297.

Lofland, John. 1996. *Social Movement Organizations: Guide to Research on Insurgent Realities*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Lorgen, Christy C. 1999. *The Experience of Villagisation: Lessons from Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Tanzania*. London: Oxfam GB.

Lu, Lingyu, and Cameron Thies. 2011. "Economic Grievance and the Severity of Civil War." *Civil Wars* 13(3): 215-231.

Lyons, Terrence. 1996. "Closing the Transition: The May 1995 Elections in Ethiopia." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34(1): 121-142.

Mandefro, Hone. 2016. "Politics by Numbers: Poverty Reduction Discourse, Contestations and Regime Legitimacy in Ethiopia." *International Review of Sociology* 26(3): 386–406.

Mao, Tse-tung. [1937] 2000. *On Guerrilla Warfare*. Champaign, Ill: First Illinois.

Marchal, Roland. 2004. "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War." In *Islamism and Its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Alex de Waal. London: Hurst, 114-145.

Marchione, Thomas J., and Ellen Messer. 2010. "Food Aid and the World Hunger Solution: Why the U.S. Should Use a Human Rights Approach." *Food and Foodways* 18(1-2): 10-27.

Markakis, John. 1987. *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____ 2011. *Ethiopia: The **Last Two** Frontiers*. Oxford: James Currey.

Markakis, John, and Nega Ayele. 1978. *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*. Nottingham: Spokesman.

McGarry, John et. al. 2008. "Integration or Accommodation? The Enduring Debate in Conflict Regulation." In *Constitutional Design for Divided Societies: Integration or Accommodation?* ed. Sujit Choudhry. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 41–88.

McCarthy, John D., and Mayer Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 82(6):1212-1241.

McCracken, Matthew J. 2004. "Abusing Self-Determination and Democracy: How the TPLF Is Looting Ethiopia." *Case Western Reserve of Journal of Int'l Law* 36(1): 183-222.

Mengiste, Melke. 2010. "ማንይናገርየነበረማንያርዲየቀበረ።"
<http://www.ethiopianreview.com/2010/melke-mengiste-jul2010.pdf>.

Mengisteab, Kidane. 2001. "Ethiopia's Ethnic-Based Federalism: 10 Years After." *African Issues* 29(1-2): 20-25.

_____ 2007. "Identity Politics, Democratisation and State Building in Ethiopia's Federal Arrangement." *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 7(2): 63-92.

Mesfin, Berouk. 2011. "The Horn of Africa Security." In *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa*, eds. Roba Sharamo and Berouk Mesfin. ISS Monograph Series, Issue 178. South Africa: Institute for Security Studies.

Metaferia, Getachew. 2009. *Ethiopia and the United States: History, Diplomacy, and Analysis*. New York: Algora Publishing.

Michael, Mackonen. 2008. "Who is Amhara?" *African Identities* 6(4): 393-404.

Midega, Milkessa. 2014. "Official Language Choice in Ethiopia: Means of Inclusion or Exclusion?" *Open Access Library Journal* 1(7): 1-13.

Milkias, Paulos. 2003. "Ethiopia, the TPLF, and the Roots of the 2001 Political Tremor." *Northeast African Studies* 10 (2): 13-66.

Moore, Will H. 2000. "The Repression of Dissent: A Substitution Model of Government Coercion." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44(1): 107-127.

Morris, Aldon D, and Carol McClurg M. eds. 1992. *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press.

Muller, Edward N. 1985. "Income Inequality, Regime Repressiveness and Political Violence." *American Sociological Review* 50(1): 47-61.

Murhula, SJ. 2012. "Democracy in Africa: An Experiment in progress." *Promotio Iustitiae* 109.

Muse, Tegegne. 2010. Ethiopiyawinet Radio interview. March 10.

Nedal, et. al. 2016. "Urban Concentration and Civil War." Unpublished manuscript. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/522fc0aee4b06bf96fa60e92/t/56b289dd356fb0b4c8540d0f/1454541299205/urban+jan+10+2016_final_notanon.pdf.

Negash, Tekeste. 1997. *Eritrea and Ethiopia: the Federal Experience*. Uppsala: NordinskaAfrikainstitutet.

Negash, Tekeste, and Kjetil Tronvoll. 2000. *Brothers at War. Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War*. Oxford: James Currey.

Ney, Virgil. 1962. *Notes on Guerrilla War: Principles and Practices*. Washington DC: Command Publications.

Noggo Dima. 2011. ESAT interview. September 20. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlC7DcTOaZE>

Norris, Pippa. 2008. *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Oakland Institute. 2013. *Development Aid to Ethiopia: Overlooking Violence, Marginalization, and Political Repression*. Oakland: The Oakland Institute.

Obermeyer, Ziad et. al. 2008. "Fifty Years of Violent War Deaths from Vietnam to Bosnia: Analysis of Data from the World Health Survey Programme," *British Medical Journal* 336 (2008): 1482–1486.

Ofcansky, Thomas P. 1993. "National Security." In *Ethiopia: A Country Study*, eds. Thomas Ofcansky and LaVerle Bennette Berry. Washington, D.C: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 235-290.

Ofcansky, Thomas P., and David Shinn. 2013. *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*. Maryland: Scarecrow Publishers.

Ofcansky, Thomas P., and LaVerle Bennette B., eds. 1993. *Ethiopia: A Country Study*. Washington, D.C: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

Omer, Ahmed H. 2002. "Close yet Far: Northern Shewa under the Derg." In *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After*, eds. Donald Donham et. al. Athens: Ohio University Press, 74-89.

Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHDI). 2013. "Ethiopia Country Briefing." *Multidimensional Poverty Index Data Bank*. OPHDI, University of Oxford. www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-povertyindex/mpi-country-briefings/.

Oromo Liberation Front, Central Committee. 1994. "Statement of the Secretary General on the State of Oromo People's Struggle and the Current Situation in Ethiopia." April 12. London.

Oromo Liberation Front. 2005. "Oromia Briefs" <http://www.oromoliberationfront.org/OromiaBriefs.htm>.

_____. 2012. "Memorandum of Understanding and Agreements Between The OLF Transitional Authority and OLF ShaneeGumii." November 20. http://oromoliberationfront.org/News/2012/Memorandum_of_Understanding_and_Agreements_Between_OLF_SHG_and_OLF_TA.pdf.

O'Neill, B. E. 1990. *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*. Washington: Brassey's.

Ostebo, Terje. 2009. "Oromumma and Umma? The Questions of Islamic Reform and Ethno-nationalism in Contemporary Bale, Ethiopia." Presented at the 3rd European Conference on African Studies, Leipzig.

Ottaway, Marina. 1995. "The Ethiopian Transition: Democratization or New Authoritarianism?" *Northeast African Studies* 2(3): 67-84.

Parmelee, Jennifer. 1992. "Ethiopia's Democratic Test; Stability Returns, but Power-Sharing Conflicts Persist." *The Washington Post*. October 6.

Pateman, Roy. 1998. *Eritrea: Even the Stones Are Burning*. Lawrenceville NJ: The Red Sea Press.

Patrick, Regan. 2000. *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers: Outside Interventions and Intrastate Conflict*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

_____. 2002. "Third Party Interventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1): 55-73.

Paul, Christopher et. al. 2013. *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*. California: RAND.

Pausewang, Siegfried, and Günter Schröder. 2009. "Ethiopia." In *Encyclopedia of Human Rights*, ed. David P Forsythe. New York: Oxford University Press, 460-461.

Plaut, Martin. 2006. "Ethiopia's Oromo Liberation Front." *Review of African Political Economy* 33 (109): 587-593.

_____. 2014. "Ethiopia-Eritrea: No War, No Peace has to End." March 15. <https://martinplaut.wordpress.com/2014/03/15/ethiopia-eritrea-no-war-no-peace-has-to-end/>

_____. 2015. "Ethiopia's Poverty Reduction—Who Benefits?" January 23.
<https://martinplaut.wordpress.com/2015/01/23/ethiopias-poverty-reduction-who-benefits/>

Pool, David. 2001. *From Guerrillas to Government: The Eritrean People's Liberation Front*. Oxford: James Currey.

Praeg, Bertus. 2006. *Ethiopia and Political Renaissance in Africa*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

Prunier, Gérard. 2008. "Armed Movements in Sudan, Chad, CAR, Somalia Eritrea and Ethiopia." Presented at the Center for International Peace Operations, Berlin.

Pustay, John S. 1965. *Counterinsurgency Warfare*. New York: The Free Press.

Rammohan, E.N. et. al. 2012. *Maoist Insurgency and India's Internal Security Architecture*. New Delhi: Vij Books.

Braukämper, Ulrich. 2005. "Controversy over Local Tradition and National Ethiopian Context: Case study of the Hadiyya." In *Afrikas Horn: Akten der Ersten Internationalen Littmann-Konferenzen 2. Bis 5. März in München*, eds. Walter Raunig and Steffan Wenig. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 363-376.

Reid, Richard J. 2011. *Frontiers of Violence in North-East Africa: Genealogies of Conflict Since C.1800*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ross, Michael L. 2004. "How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from Thirteen Cases." *International Organization* 58(1): 35-67.

Salehyan, Idean. et. al. 2011. "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups." *International Organization* 65(4): 709–744.

Sambanis, Nicholas. 2001. "Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes? A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part 1)." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45(3): 259-282.

Sanchez, Carlos. 1991. "A Victory Tempered by Sorrow." *The Washington Post*. May 26.

Sarbo, Dima N. 2009. "Contested Legitimacy: Coercion and the State in Ethiopia", PhD diss. University of Tennessee.

_____ 2011. ESAT interview. September 20.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfnC9eZNtSs>

Schmidt, Elizabeth. 2013. *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schraeder, Peter J. 2006. "From Irredentism to Secession: The Decline of Pan-Somali Nationalism." In *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States*, ed., Lowell W Barrington. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 107-138.

Segni, Birhanemeskel A. 2015. "Top Ten Reasons Why Afan Oromo Should Be the Federal Working Language in Ethiopia." *Finfine Tribune*. March 4.
<http://gadaa.net/FinfinneTribune/2015/03/birhanemeskel-abebe-segni-top-ten-reasons-why-afan-oromo-should-be-the-federal-working-language-in-ethiopia/>

Slater, Dan. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Slater, Dan, and Sofia Fenner. 2011. "State Power and Staying Power: Infrastructural Mechanisms and Authoritarian Durability." *Journal of International Affairs* 65(1): 15-29.

Smith, Lahra. 2008. "The Politics of Contemporary Language Policy in Ethiopia." *Journal of Developing Societies* 24 (2): 20–243.

_____ 2007. "Political Violence and Democratic Uncertainty in Ethiopia." Special Report. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.

Spears, Ian. 2013. "Africa's Informal Power-Sharing and the Prospects for Peace." *Civil Wars*, 15(1): 37-53.

Sriram, C., and Zahar. M. 2009. "The Perils of Power-Sharing: Africa and Beyond." *Africa Spectrum* 44(3): 11-39.

Staniland, Paul. 2010. "Cities on Fire: Social Mobilization, State Police, and Urban Insurgency." *Comparative Political Studies* 43(12): 1623 –1649.

_____. 2012. "Organizing Insurgency: Networks, Resources, and Rebellion in South Asia." *International Security* 37(1): 142-177.

Stathis Kalyvas, and Laia Balcells. 2010. "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict." *American Political Science Review* 104(3): 415-429.

Sudan Tribune. 2006. "Ethiopian Commander Defects to Eritrea." August 10. <http://dev.sudantribune.com/Comment/Article/Index/8-10-2006-Ethiopian-army-commander-defects-to-Eritrea-/17023>.

Survival International. 1988. "For Their Own Good: Ethiopia's Villagisation Programme." London: Survival International

Tadesse, Kiflu. 1998. *The Generation: Part Two*. New York, Oxford: University Press of America.

Tadesse, Medhane. 1999. *The Eritrean-Ethiopian War: Retrospect and Prospects: Reflections on the Making of Conflicts in the Horn of Africa, 1991—1998*. Addis Ababa: Mega Printing Press.

_____. 2011. "Gambella: The Impact of Local Conflict on Regional Security." Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies.

Tareke, Gebru. 1991. *Ethiopia: Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 2001. "The Ethiopia-Somalia War of 1977 Revisited." *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33(3): 635-667.

_____. 2002. "From Lash to Red Star: The Pitfalls of Counter-Insurgency in Ethiopia, 1980-82." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 40(3): 465-498.

_____. 2008. "The Red Terror in Ethiopia: A Historical Aberration." *Journal of Developing Societies* 24(2): 183–206.

_____. 2009. *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. 1994. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 2007. "Inside Insurgencies: Politics and Violence in an Age of Civil War." *Perspectives on Politics* 5(3): 587–600.

Tekle, Amare. 1989. "The Determinants of the Foreign Policy of Revolutionary Ethiopia." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 27(3): 479-502.

Tesfay, Seyoum Y. 2016 "Why Ethiopia, Eritrea Skirmish is Unlikely to Spiral into Another War." *The Conversation*. June 23. <https://theconversation.com/why-ethiopia-eritrea-skirmish-is-unlikely-to-spiral-into-another-war-61381>.

Tibebu, Teshale. 1995. *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*. Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press Inc.

Tilly, Charles. 2005. "Repression, Mobilization, and Explanation." In *Repression and Mobilization*, eds. Christian Davenport et.al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 211-226.

Tiruneh, Andargachew. 1993. *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1987: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Toft, Monica D. 2010. "Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?" *International Security* 34(4): 7–36.

Tola, Babile. 1989. *To Kill a Generation - The Red Terror in Ethiopia*. Washington, D.C.: Free Ethiopia Press.

Trejo, Guillermo, 2014. *Popular Movements in Autocracies: Religion, Repression, and Indigenous Collective Action in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tronvoll, Kjetil. 2000. *Ethiopia: A New Start?* London: Minority Rights Grove International.

_____ 2010. “The Ethiopian 2010 Federal and Regional Elections: Re-establishing the One-Party State.” *African Affairs* 110 (438): 121-136.

Tronvoll, Kjetil, and Sarah Vaughan. 2003. *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life*. Stockholm: EditaSverige.

Tseggai, Araya. 1988. “The History of the Eritrean Struggle.” In *The Long Struggle of Eritrea for Independence and Constructive Peace*, eds. Lionel Cliffe and Basil Davidson. Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 67-87.

Tull, Denis M., and Andreas Mehler. 2005. “The Hidden Costs of Power-Sharing: Reproducing Insurgent Violence in Africa.” *African Affairs* 104 (416): 375-398.

Turton, David, ed. 2006. *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Tuso, Hamdesa. 1997. “Ethiopia: New Political Order. Ethnic Conflict in the Post Cold War Era.” *Africa Rivista Trimestrale di Studi e Documentazione dell’Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* 52(3): 343-364.

United Nations Security Council. 2014. “Letter dated 10 October 2014 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council” http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2014_727.pdf

Uvin, Peter. 1998. *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press.

Vaughan, Sarah. 1994. “The Addis Ababa Transitional Conference of July 1991: its Origins, History and Significance”. Centre for African Studies, Edinburgh University.

_____ 2003. “Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia”, PhD diss. University of Edinburgh.

Vestal, Theodore M. 1999. *Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State*. London: Praeger.

Walter, Barbara F. 2009. "Bargaining Failures and Civil War." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12(1): 243– 261.

Wansamo, K. 2007. "Towards Building Stability in a Multinational/ethnic Society: Conflicts in Sidaamaland, Ethiopia", PhD diss. Lancaster University.

Weinstein, Jeremy. 2007. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WeldeGiorgis, Andebrhan. 2014. *Eritrea at a Crossroads: A Narrative of Triumph, Betrayal and Hope*. Houston: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.

Weldemichael, Awet T. 2012. *Third World Colonialism and Strategies of Liberation: Eritrea and East Timor Compared*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wiebel, Jacob. 2017. "The Ethiopian Red Terror." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. November.

<http://africanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277734-e-188>.

Wikileaks. 2011. "Ogaden: Counter-Insurgency Operations Hitting A Wall, Part 11." <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/wikileaks-files/somalia-wikileaks/8302118/OGADEN-COUNTER-INSURGENCY-OPERATIONS-HITTING-A-WALL-PART-II.html>.

Woldemariam, Michael H. 2011. "Why Rebels Collide: Factionalism and Fragmentation in African Insurgencies", PhD diss. Princeton University.

Wood, Elisabeth J. 2015. "Social Movement and Violence in Civil War and their Social Legacies." *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, eds. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 452-466.

Woodward, Peter. 1996. *The Horn of Africa: State Politics and International Relations*. London: I.B. Tauris.

_____. 2006. *US Foreign Policy and the Horn of Africa*. Hampshire & Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

World Bank dataset on Ethiopia. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/ethiopia>.

World Bank. 2015. "Poverty in Ethiopia Down 33 Percent Since 2000." January 20.

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/01/20/poverty-ethiopia-down-33-percent>

Yifter, Hermela. 2013. "Remembering Meles Zenawi: His Vision and His Legacy." <http://www.mfa.gov.et/pressMore.php?pg=53>

Ylönen, Aleks, and Jan Záhorský. 2017. *The Horn of Africa since the 1960s: Local and International Politics Intertwined*. London: Routledge.

Yodfat, Aryeh Y. 1980. "The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa." *Northeast African Studies* 1(3): 1-17.

Yohannes, Okbazghi. 1991. *Eritrea: A Pawn in World Politics*. Florida: University of Florida Press.

Young, John. 1994. "Peasants and Revolution in Ethiopia: Tigray 1975-1989", PhD diss. Simon Fraser University.

_____. 1997. *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975–1991*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 1998. "Regionalism and Democracy in Ethiopia." *Third World Quarterly* 19(2): 191-204.

_____. 2007. "Armed Groups Along Sudan's Eastern Frontier: An Overview and Analysis." *Small Arms Survey*. Geneva: Graduate Institute of International Studies.

Záhorský, Jan. 2014. "Ethiopia's Hegemony in the Horn of Africa: Internal Tensions and External Challenges Before and After Meles Zenawi." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 5(1): 23-38.

Zahorick, Jan, and Wondwosen Teshome. 2009. "Debating Language Policy in Ethiopia." *Asian and African Studies* 18(1): 80-102.

Zald, Mayer N., and John McCarthy. 1987. *Social Movements in an Organizational Society: Collected Essays*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Zartman, William. 2000. "Ethnic Conflicts: Mediating Conflicts of Need, Greed and Creed." *Orbis* 44 (2): 255-266.

Zewde, Bahru. 2001. *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*. Oxford: James Currey.

Appendix

Intensity of Insurgency in post-1974 Ethiopia

Several sources¹¹⁰ can help us arrive at rough estimates of insurgent and government casualties from the Dergue's period. According to Ministry of National Defense, more than 400,000 of Dergue's soldiers were killed (or were unaccounted for) during the war between 1974 and 1991 (Tareke 2009, 134). Other sources provide some significantly lower numbers such as de Waal (1992, 5) (100,000) but this is hardly dependable since there is a high possibility that the war with just one of the insurgents (the EPLF) could have claimed more than that number of the Dergue's combatans (Tareke 2009, 134). As far as insurgent casualties are concerned, the TPLF admitted the loss of some 50,000 of its fighters and the estimated casualty figure for the EPLF is around 70,000 (Ibid). These were the most important northern insurgents during the military regime. Tareke's estimates of the casualty figure for the rest of the insurgents in the whole country (5000) are hardly plausible. My own interviews with the veterans of some of the eastern rebel movements would render this figure extremely low. It is highly probable that the WSLF alone could have lost some 5000 of its fighters in its fierce wars with the Dergue's army between 1975 and 1984. The combined casualty figure for the OLF, SALF, SLM (Sidama Liberation Movement), and ALF could be around 5000. The northern-based EDU, according to its founder, has lost "thousands" of its fighters (Ras Mengesha, interview, Addis Ababa, Oct 2014). The centres of Ethiopian politics,

¹¹⁰ Measuring intensity of insurgency across time and region in post-1974 Ethiopia is bound to remain controversial not least because accuracy in measuring the most important indicator, combatant death toll, is nearly unattainable. Among other things, many of the casualty figures come from government and insurgent sources. Figures such as these cannot be taken for granted, both when governments and insurgents report about their own losses and those of their contenders. Whenever they exist and appear reasonable based on what we already know about the issue at hand, independent sources and/or confirmation of partisan sources by an independent body should be given priority.

the towns, were also hotbeds of deadly feuds. The urban insurgency of the EPRP, according to Wiebel (2017, 1) claimed the lives of some 50,000 people. Compared to the highly exaggerated number of 250,000 victims estimated by Tola (in Tareke 2008, 204) and the unjustifiably low figure of 10,000 given by de Waal (1992, 101), Wiebel's figure sounds acceptable. Adding up these figures (400,000 government, 120,000 EPLF and TPLF, slightly over 1000 EDU, 50,000 EPRP, 10,000 WSLF, SALF, OLF and ALF combatants) would give us a figure well above 580,000. This can be taken as a rough and reasonable estimate of the dead during the armed struggles that engulfed the whole of Ethiopia between 1974 and 1991.

Estimated by region, the northern highlands were undoubtedly the graveyards of most of the deceased. In it were buried far more than 300,000 of the Ethiopian army and well beyond 120,000 insurgents. The centre might have claimed more than 50,000 lives¹¹¹. The eastern wars wouldn't have claimed many more than 15,000 combatant lives. This gives us a rough picture of regional variations in the level of insurgency in Dergue's Ethiopia itself¹¹².

Giving estimates for combatant casualty in post-1991 Ethiopia is even harder, since very little research has been done on this topic in general. The only insurgent groups that acquired relatively better academic attention have been the OLF and the ONLF, and given the fact that the former is just touched upon only tangentially in most of these works, the ONLF would be the only rebel organization that has been properly studied. The other Eritrean-based insurgents have been largely ignored by the academic community. As a result, much of our knowledge so far—including figures

¹¹¹ As not many Ethiopian soldiers were killed during the EPRP's insurrection.

¹¹² All figures do not in any way include the civilian casualty and those who were killed by the war indirectly, for instance, through war-induced famine, which would bring the total number of dead to more than 2 million

on casualty and fighting power--about the post-1991 insurgents comes directly from what their supporters and members claim about them.

The achievement claims of the insurgents as posted in their websites are highly exaggerated to say the least. All the insurgents that have some roots in the northern or central parts of Ethiopia—TPDM, EPPF, G7 Popular, and ADMF (Amhara Democratic Movement Force)—and the ARDUF and APP (Afar People Party) that hail from the Afar region have hardly engaged the EPRDF government in vicious battles that could result in hundreds or thousands of combatant deaths. Only the government's confrontations with the OLF and the ONLF could have produced significant number of deaths, relatively speaking. According to my informants (two ex-OLF fighters, 2014, interview, Toronto, June, 2014), around a thousand of OLF and fewer than 100 of EPRDF fighters could have been killed during the early 90s.

The government-ONLF conflict is also one of the deadliest ones by the standards of post-1991 Ethiopian scale of insurgency. Ever since its removal from regional power in 1994, the ONLF has fought with government forces on several occasions and is still an active, but declining, force in the Ogaden region. Between 2007 and 2013 (the period of the most intense fightings), ONLF sources claim that the front has killed 3,350 Ethiopian security personnel while the Ethiopian government maintains that 560 ONLF rebels have been killed by its forces (Hagman 2014, 28). According to most of my informants who have closely followed the Ogadeni insurgency over the years, these numbers are highly exaggerated. It would be more prudent to keep the total casualty figures (rebels and government forces combined) since 1994 at around a thousand. That is as far as it goes since it “remains impossible for outsiders to accurately determine how many combatants have died on both sides” (Hagman 2014, 28).

The preceding discussions on the casualties of post-1991 insurgency give us a very different picture of political stability as compared to the Dergue's regime. When all is said and done, the number of combatant deaths would not be significantly higher than 3000s (1000-2000 OLF-government, 1000 ONLF-governemnt, 200 others, to be more specific).